

# HOUSE OF LORDS #14

This is *House Of Lords*, a zeen by, for and about publishing and publishers, GMing and GMs. It runs no games, and is available to just about anybody. It's composed primarily of the thoughts of its publisher, and an array of letters on topics relevant to publishing a dipzeen in the modern world. Hopefully, this is a forum for those with experience to share the wealth.

You can get this zeen one of two or three ways. First of all, by sending me one American Dollar per issue. Second, by trading publications with me. (This, and maybe one more issue will still go out to those who have cut trades during our long recess.) There used to be a third way: agree to run this off for me, at no cost to myself, and in the manner to which I have become accustomed, but now the manner to which I've become accustomed is to have my own copier right in my own little home...unless, of course, you want to come over to our house and do it! It can't hurt to ask. Any cheap nonGMpubbers out there?

I also expect a fair amount of participation from all of you out there. This zeen sinks or swims on the basis of your contributions. Yes, we spell it "zeen."

Your publisher for this evening is Julie Martin, 17601 Lisa Dr, Rockville, MD 20855-1319. Wonder who will notice the difference without reading this. Wonder who would have if we hadn't told.

Each subheading has at one time been the subject of a New Business "feature." That's how we choose topics, more or less. If you'd like to see a particular topic discussed, just write a couple paragraphs worth of your opinions on the subject to get the ball rolling and we'll go with it.

## Announcements

*Carolina Command & Commentary* is both new and published monthly by David Hood (604 Tinkerbell Rd, Chapel Hill, NC 27514). Subs are 50¢ an issue, \$5 game fee. David would like to get up some discussion on scoring systems and philosophy. Or is that the philosophy of scoring systems?

Jason Russ has folded *The King's Court*. Refunds have been made. Rest in peace.

Also gone is Apollo Creed, uh, *Appalling Greed*. After well over one hundred issues, Mark Larzelere has finally been put out to stud. Hey, Mark, better that than the glue factory. Scratch another from the Old Guard.

Amidst all these folds, an old zeen comes back. *Passchendaele*, by François Cuerrier (2303 Eglinton Ave E, #305, Scarborough, Ont, CANADA, M1K 2N6), one of the more interesting Canadian zeens of several years ago, has returned for another run. Subs are 10/\$7, games are \$2 with a refundable \$4 NMR fee. Worth taking a look, if only to see all the different ways to get free sub credit.

I am pleased and honored to announce that Bruce Linsey has named me "Runestone Poll Custodian Under the Covenant." I guess the last three years of tortuous (look it up) work have finally taken their toll. Don't worry, Bruce, I will carry on the fine old traditions of the Runestone Poll, but when do I get the whip of office, huh?

There's another PDORA coming up, with all of the usual goings on. I wonder if they accepted my bids for funding as MNC/UC and RPC/UC?

Rod Walker (1273 Crest Dr, Encinitas, CA, 92024) has taken over the US Orphan Service, with Pete Gaughan (3121 E Park Row Dr, #165, Arlington, TX, 76010) as his Associate Custodian. Way to go, Rod, still making the power grab after all these years.

Robert Sacks (4861 Broadway 5-V, NY, NY, 10034) is looking for help with the Orphan Games Project, as well as other hobby services. Have to give equal time, you know.

{I suppose the most important announcement here is that Julie is now your publisher, editor, and chief bottle-washer. That should give me more time to pursue other interests, and not have to fold the zeen in the process. Besides, she's been doing most of the work anyway, and should be able to get the credit for it. If I have any comments to make, they'll go in these braces. Very few of them this time. —DM}



## The Concept

(DAVE MCCRUMB) If you decide to fold *HOL*, it might be a good idea to let someone else pick it up. I get a lot out of it myself and feel that most of the discussions are worthwhile. The major problem would be finding someone both willing to do it and acceptable to you and the subscribers. That is tricky.

I see nothing wrong with a publication deadline of two or even three months. Most discussions would not suffer as there is no time limit. Those that do are usually of such a volatile nature that I think they should not appear (*i.e.*, the MNC problem). I hope you keep it up.

[It is hard to keep any discussion of *any* topic from becoming volatile in this *zeen*, due to the nature of the participants, not the topics themselves. It is up to the participants to keep the discussion civil and to the point. Where they do not, the editor will try to mitigate, but I prefer to err on the side of too little editing than too much. We can't let the *zeen* get too boring, either.]

(PETE GAUGHAN) I still object to you changing the spelling of *zeen* in my letters.

[That's okay, Pete, we don't hold it against you. Correcting misspellings is only one of our many hobby services.]

(MARK NELSON) There's quite a few things in *HOL* that I'd like to reprint in the UK. Do you have any objections (copyright would remain with you, of course)? If I sent you copies for those whose comments I reprint, could you forward them for me? Do you have any back issues of *HOL*? If so, can you keep one of each for me, tell me how much it will cost to order them, and I'll send the money via Biggles and the ISE.

A topic of correspondence which would interest me is as follows: "Which US *zeens* would you recommend to an Englishman if: i) He wanted to play in a good game of Diplomacy; ii) He wanted to get involved in the US hobby (*e.g.*, which are the main hobby *zeens*); and, iii) He was interested in games other than Diplomacy?" At the moment I sub to *ECU*, trade with *HOL*, but that's it. Where from here? (Perhaps I should mention that my brother trades with *Bushwacker* so I get to see that.)

You know one thing that strikes me straight away is the difference in perception of what the Hobby is. In the UK, most people take it just as

another hobby, spending a couple of hours a week on it (if that), but not getting worked up about. One or two *zeen* editors take it more seriously and spend nearly all their spare time on it. *But* it still remains a friendly hobby. However, in the US...you seem to take things to preposterous, serious lengths. You're so official!! You have rules and regulations, and more rules, arguments over rules, serious feuds, Official rule-clarifiers, rival camps, rival MNCs...I like it, I think.

In the UK there has been a raising trend for feuds involving personal attacks, extreme nastiness...including not sending the recipient of an attack a copy of the *zeen* and refusing to print his comments...strangely enough these kind of editors are situated around Birmingham...I don't like this. As long as the English Hobby remains run by Gentlemen for Gentlemen, I'll be happy looking on at the cut-throat American Hobby, but from a safe distance!

Take all this business over your MNC. Shocking!!! Why not, in any case, have the "real" MNs and NAVB numbers given out by the same person (and how did the duties ever become split)? The American Variant sub-hobby is not widely known in the UK, and as far as I've been able to find out, the only US hobby man to take an interest in UK variants has been Fred C Davis. I suspect that quite a few of his comments, especially his comments on Robert Sacks, might be contested. Is anyone willing to offer any other views apart from the Davis line? Robert Sacks has particularly had a very bad press; I gather he doesn't get on with Fred at all well.

(Any reference to "men" equally applies to those of the fair sex, in this and all other letters of mine.)

On the question of copyright. In the UK, lucky for us, copyright is automatic on publication, the good ole' 1956 copyright act. The bad news is that a breach of that copyright, if taken to court, will lead to damages based on the value of earnings prevented by said breach. So if I photocopy four copies of Richard Sharp's *Game of Diplomacy*, damages will be the cost of buying four copies of *GOD*.

There's quite a few comments on the UK Hobby and it's only natural that I'd want to have a say. I think that the UK hobby is speeding up. However, there are number of *zeens* with excessive deadlines/turnarounds which seriously affect the overall figures. If we take away these *zeens* the picture is much better. What I can't understand is editors who continue publishing when their *zeens* come out every eight-plus weeks. There are a number of *zeens* in this year's UK *zeen* poll which have brought out less than three issues in the last



year!!! As a games player, primarily, I also marvel at zeens like *PoW*. Great presentation, good news and reviews but, as I've told Wallace, I'd never play a game in it—seven issues a year is just too slow for me. Some editors feel that if they don't have any articles ready they should wait until there are some before printing; on the other hand, I'll print on time whatever, as my allegiance is to my games. I think that most established zeens plateau at five-weekly, whilst the newer ones go for monthly/four-weekly. The decline in two-/three-weekly in the UK is interesting but not surprising. How are things over the waters? What kind of frequencies are we talking about? I've never seen *Bohemian Rhapsody*, but the following quote is typical of the press it has attracted in the UK: "...this isn't a barrier to subscription, provided you don't mind a leisurely turnaround and not the greatest sense of timing...in the letter column there is a letter from Paul Gardner reminding him that in June 1986 that Malc promised to trade with him and that Paul has since sent him five copies of *NNY* with no return. Malc admitted that the zeen had been slightly delayed!! ...the score at the trade's cessation is *Bohemian Rhapsody* 5, *Gallimaufry* 16. ...as *BR* inevitably turns up after the deadline, you can see why I think that, good as *BR* can be...I think that the hobby can live without his attitude." Steve Doubleday, *Gallimaufry* 69, March 1987.

I don't know what the frequency is now; I suspect that it has changed, but Malc obviously doesn't see many gaming zeens. I've noticed that there are, in the main, two types of zeens offering Dip in the UK: i) A gamer's zeen—there are a number of these around running Dip to four-/five-weekly deadlines; ii) Chat zeens, zeens which have a heavy emphasis on politics/discussion/non-hobby related reading material, etc. These have a much longer turnaround. Naturally I only get the second if they're very good (which most aren't) or five-weekly.

By the time you get to this sentence, you'll have realized that I object to the sentence: "British zeens have a slow turnaround," especially coming from a man who cut all his British trades!!

[Most US zeens have four-weekly/monthly deadlines, so I don't know how I can recommend a good US zeen for an Englishman to play in—those deadlines are going to tend to shut him out of the negotiations. Of course, we have some real slowpokes, too, with lots of games and lots of chat, but then I couldn't recommend them as good places to play. The "main hobby zeens"? Well, that depends on who you're talking to. Other games?

*Bushwacker* is a good start, from Fred Davis. Next try *The Appalachian General* or *Abattoir*, both by Dave McCrumb.

[I can give you a different perspective on Robert Sacks, but I'd rather deal with issues than personalities here. Besides, you have already figured out for yourself that he can't be *that* bad.

[Back issues are available, and since we've been so late with this issue, they're on us. Enjoy them, and feel free to reprint at will.]

(PETER SULLIVAN) I don't know if the overall trend of slowing production in UK zeens will ever be reversed. What I suspect will happen is that the players in six-, seven-, and eight-weekly zeens will say, "Isn't Diplomacy boring?" (which it is, at that speed) and switch to non-Diplomacy games instead. Or else drop out.

[Even under the best of playing conditions, for most people after a certain number of years playing Diplomacy becomes boring. But then the players become eager GMs and publishers who find new players and run short deadlines, starting the cycle all over again. The only thing which never speeds up again is the mail, and that may indeed eventually be the killer.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I am going to be getting my own computer fairly soon, as I have some money coming in. I'm thinking seriously about a 1040ST with a relatively cheap desktop publishing program. Do you know whether the Hill has plans to do anything with the ST? The only really disappointing thing about not getting an IBM-compatible is that I can't run either COMPUTER DIPLOMACY or APBA MAJOR LEAGUE PLAYER'S BASEBALL on it. But the IBM system I tried was really difficult to use. What kind of system do you use to do *House of Lords*? (I would ask about *Retaliation*, for which I assume you use the same computer, but as I've never seen an issue of it I couldn't really judge anything from it.) I don't expect to have a "full-capacity" system, as I only have about a grand coming and will probably be stuck with a dot matrix printer. But if I get a decent one, I can still get something relatively decent and put out a nice-looking zeen. Besides, there's more to putting out a zeen via computer than just making it look like a million. I still need decent records capacity so I can keep even more records on my sublist, as well as keeping better track of my sample count. Anybody in the *HOL* bunch know anything about ST



software?

Enough about that. I wonder how other publishers are using their fancy systems, but I presume that's an old topic for the House. I am also curious about the "second-string" of computer-based publishers.

[We use a Mac Plus and Macwrite to assemble *HOL, Retal, Thorazeen, Lord of Hosts*, and *Exit to Sosaria* (I think that about covers it....). Once most of the words are typed in, we do the page layout in ReadySetGo4, and finally print it all out using an Apple Laserwriter. Next issue, the new Mac II will be in, and Dick's work will have a NEC Postscript printer (Laserwriter Plus clone) installed, so they'll be the hardware of choice. The address list is kept up by Reflex, from Borland.

[The system works quite well. Macwrite is a fine, simple word processor, ideal for getting text into the machine. RSG4 meshes well with Macwrite, and makes it all very pretty, while also being very easy to use. Most of the IBM compatible systems I've seen don't handle proportional text very well, and end up looking just like nice typewriters. Good, but still lacking.

[Bob Olsen has an ST, but uses it mostly for games (a worthy cause in itself). Don Del Grande uses one for Life of Monty, but the results have been mixed at best. Laser printing makes all the difference, and it's cost-effective too. Even when we were paying a dollar a page to get originals printed, since each laser page fit about 40% more text we were making our money back in saved postage and copying costs.]

(WALLACE NICOLL) Now, turning to things Macintosh. What software and hardware have you? I'm planning on getting a Mac Plus, Imagewriter II, and 20Mb hard disk—using a friend who should be able to work it that I get "education" prices (the Mac Plus at about half price—£900 instead of £1800, and the printer/disc drive at about 20% off retail price) because they are full-time students! I should be able to get MacWrite and MacPaint (maybe MacDraw), plus a copy of Pagemaker 2 (hence the hard disk) and a bit of PD stuff. What access do you have to Public Domain/Shareware software? Of do you have anything that I might be interested in?

[Have I got public domain stuff for you! Ah, more than you have ever dreamed existed.... Classics like Talking Moose, Eyeball Clock, Camera, Seek and Destroy, Daleks, Phrazecraze and more! Let me know if you do get the Plus, and I'll

send a disk or two full of goodies your way. From what I've seen, you'd be much happier with ReadySetGo than Pagemaker. RSG is slanted more toward large documents, while PM is aimed at shorter, more elaborate doings. We use a Jasmine 20 hard disk (the price was right, about \$650) now, but that will change when the new system is all in.

[Good luck with the Plus, if you like yours as much as we do ours, you'll be very happy.]

(BOB OLSEN) Speaking of hobby ineptness, as you were when you mentioned Woody's name, you demonstrated a good bit of it when you forgot one pretty good little country zippy in the regular-long term-20-plus page category. You've heard of *Magus*, eh sport? Another product of a husband-and-wife team, too. As a Langley toady, it behooved me to mention it. Looks like you blew it again...probably a Personal Attack...

Mr Emmert's ruminations on the matter of press (ill-equipped as he is for ruminations of any sort...) bring back memories. Like one time when the legendary *Down and Dirty* arrived in the mail; I hastily ripped it open, avidly read all the press, and went my merry way...only to realize, some three hours later, that I had *completely forgotten to look at the moves*. Press addiction—it's a terrible thing. Let's stamp it out in our lifetime, and start by stamping out Mr Emmert.

In answer to Mr Stewart's question about Golden Age Press: I'm no expert in this field, but there was some Controversy about this matter a couple of years ago. As I understand it—I think this is mostly Ken Peel's interpretation of what Rod Walker told him—Golden Age Press is more than just a fictionalized vintage yarn with continuing characters. It also requires an appropriate dateline complete with a date falling within the season of the game, i.e., 4/19/1904 would be allowable for S04 press, whereas 9/13/04 would be a disastrous *faux pas*. Further, the press has to be presented as the product of a wire service—TNS (Toady News Service), etc. Thus we see that Golden Age Press is a form as formalized and restricted as (say) the sonnet.

Of course, I could be wrong about this. Mr Peel lies a lot.

[I like your use of the honorific in your letter, Mr Olsen. I think that the use of titles, as in the parliament of our namesake, lends a more civil air to the proceedings. Doesn't "Mr Peel lies a lot" ring on the ear a little better than the sneering "Peel lies a lot"? I think it does. If only there were some way to



make everyone wear powdered wigs while they were writing in...]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** Better a good game with bad press than a bad game with good press.

There is a difference between a not-for-profit organization and a money-losing organization. In a not-for-profit organization, no profits are intended, and any profits that may occur are not distributed for private gain.

**(JIM BURGESS)** I find I value press and the game about equally, too. My impression, however, is that most games have a pretty strong imbalance. I know one thing: the GM cannot do much about the balance without blatant interference. I know. I've tried and failed many times. That's a Libra for you...

[Are there more bad games with good press, or more good games with bad press? What measures did you take to try to correct the imbalance?]

## Archives

**(JOHN CARUSO)** You couldn't get me to volunteer to be an archivist if you gave me a covenant. You know how much space I have. Did you forget "Dick Martin's Box" so quickly?

[Who could ever forget the legendary "Dick Martin's box"?]

**(SIMON BILLENNESS)** From what I've heard, Richard Walkerdine's UK Archives has about 95% of all British zeens. Apparently by adding a couple of other former hobbyists' collections to his own personal archives, Richard managed to amass a virtually complete collection of past British zeens. Since he trades with everyone, he keeps the Archive well up to date. Other than keeping the material in order by zeen, I don't think he's seriously attempted indexing the collection. However, people can request information or even visit the Archives since, apparently, Richard has an entire room devoted to zeens.

All this talk about massive cross-referenced indexes is all very well, but it's all pie-in-the-sky until somebody does the hard work of gathering together a fairly complete selection of zeens. Sadly, I can't see Elmer or Larry doing it. Elmer seems to have dropped out of the hobby, and Larry is just too busy with *DW*. It's a pity Julie doesn't take it on. It

would be more valuable than all that MNC under the Covenant nonsense.

[Mommy's doing important business right now, Simon darling. Go play with your ISE.]

[My time is very valuable to me. How valuable is an archives to you? I'd consider a salary of \$25,000 a year, plus expenses, a reasonable remuneration for the work involved. I estimate the job would take two years working half-time (I have another part-time job). Give me your terms. "Fun" and "love of the hobby" are not negotiable. I do the MNC/UC for those reasons.]

**(PETER SULLIVAN)** The UK Archive is said to have about 95% complete coverage of British zeens, which is not bad considering it wasn't set up until 1982. Since then, it's got more or less 100% coverage, as Richard Walkerdine trades with *everything*. The Archive doesn't contain any duplicates or private letters—it's just zeens. It doesn't get much use, but it's kind of nice to know it's there.

What's the need to go through old zeens for orphans? You mean Robert would actually look through an old zeen, say, "Gosh, it looks like 1974XX was never finished!" and restart it? What are the odds any of the original players would still be around? And if you insert standbys for every power in the same season, it's not really the same game, is it?

[I don't know if Robert would, but some of our BNC/Orphan Services have done just what you've described. If just one original player is still around who wants to finish the game, they'll bend over backwards to accommodate him. I would agree that a mass replacement of players creates an entirely new game, but our BNCs have let stranger things pass as regular games. And many times they don't look through old zeens so much to restart games as to complete the records for games that are still in progress, or finished yet never reported.]

**(MARK NELSON)** A Hobby Archive is *important*, if well run and accessible. Anyone who has a copy of any zeen has an Archive (true it isn't very big). I personally have become so enamoured of the Hobby (so much so that I do my University work in my spare time...) that I actually make an attempt to get copies of old zeens for my own collection and read them thoroughly. A knowledge of the past is essential to fully understand the present, and more importantly, it makes manipulation of Hobby figures that little bit easier.



The problem with an Archive could be how does one classify articles and the such like in it? I suspect the answer is that, in the main, you don't. You can't cater for every possible use, so you just do a few of the more obvious ones. The Archives are available for consultation by the public, remember, and doubtless they'll be wanting obscure things. I don't think that many people use the Archives, but the facility should be there—it'd be a sad day if no one in the UK hobby had access to back issues of the zeens of yesteryear.

Luckily the man with the "official" archives in the UK, Richard Walkerdine, is one of the nicest, most polite gentlemen I have ever known. He also has an amazing knowledge of the contents of the Archives, but then he has been an active member of the UK hobby almost continuously since 1972. I've always found him willing to answer any little question and look things up. The man in charge of "the archive" should have a large knowledge of the contents, otherwise it wouldn't work, would it? The person in charge of the Archives has to be interested in the Archives for the Archives sake. It would also help if there was a zeen which printed material either directly from the Archives or based on the work on the material (in the UK, this is *The Numbers Game*).

RJW's collection would be about 95% complete, I'd guess, maybe more. Although he trades with nearly every games zeen concerned with the Hobby, editors also send him copies of their zeens specifically for the Archives, so he ends up getting nearly everything published. I never know what question/idea I might have, hence one of the reasons for collection and not throwing away. Zeens should be preserved on the basis of *possible use*. Even game report-only zeens can be useful!!

I am shock and dismayed that Pete Gaughan could even consider throwing away zeens. If he'd like to contact me and advise me how much it'll cost to ship his rejects to me, then I'll send the money via Biggles....

[You're right that the person in charge has to be interested in the Archives for their own sake. What happens if Walkerdine finally loses interest and drops out, or dies? Does he consider his collection to be a private one, or a hobby trust? You UKers seem quite enamoured of the Archives—maybe you should find out.]

(WALLACE NICOLL) You asked about the Walkerdine collection/archive. As far as I'm aware, Richard is/was trying to get a copy of every UK zeen that contained Dip and other games. As a

result, he trades his zeen *Mad Policy* widely, though I doubt he trades as widely now as he used to. He occasionally prints a list of his "missing" zeens with the hope that someone out there about to empty their cupboards of old zeens might have some zeens he needs. I sometimes wonder at the reasons behind his collecting of zeens. And what if he was to drop out completely? No one else I know has such a large collection of zeens, or, I suspect, "collects" zeens with the view to establishing an archive.

(PETE GAUGHAN) Hey, I read "Senilio," but I just don't save it. I want to *forget* the Reagan Glitch as soon as I can.

[Can't say that I blame you.]

## Burnout

(MELINDA HOLLEY) I suppose if I ever succumbed to burnout, I'd have to change my name and go into hiding. The Orphan Director would lynch me for sure...but only if he beat numerous GMs to it. I suppose the closest I get to burnout is just after I've typed an issue of *Rebel* or after I've just addressed 80-90 issues and stamped them. But I bounce back because I still like the game and what I'm doing in the hobby.

[You burn out *after* the issue is done? That's when I feel the best! I feel the most burnt out right before the next issue is due.]

{If I burned out *after* the issue came out, what would be the point? There'd never be a good excuse for a delay, because by the time you had an excuse ready (burnout), you wouldn't need it. I like to be more efficient than that, and not waste a single decent excuse. —DM}

(DAVE MCCRUMB) Yeah, I've burned out, but I recovered. I'm not burned out now, just overwhelmed.

(MARK NELSON) I suspect that everyone at some stage or the other experiences burnout problems. The most common examples are editors at school/University, not particularly because of the work, but because it is a time when their character/outlook on life is changing. It is also probably true that people with other interests are prone to burnout a little bit more easily than real people (real people = people who live the Hobby).



But it's amazing the number that keep bouncing back. Oh, for the joys of a short break.

For editors, spreading the responsibility can be a good help, as long as the helpers don't burn out. Luckily I have two interested brothers who help me out. However, beware helpers dropping out of the Hobby!! You know things are on dodgy ground when people promise things "in a couple of weeks" because they've had "a great deal of new work to do." Once that illusion which some call real life takes a hold, the illness is usually terminal, for once the editor has broken out of the regularity of publishing/hobby work, the "joys" of "real life," I fear, are too much for them. The worst cases are non-pubbies, though. There is nothing that can be done about dropouts leaving a trail of games across the Hobby. It's also sad.

[Not as sad as the people who "live the Hobby." They are the only ones who are really hurt by the dropouts, because it messes up their lives, instead of just their pastimes.]

(WALLACE NICOLL) Re, the team approach to publishing a zeen. You will have read in the latest issues that changes are afoot with *PoW!* Teamwork can get a problem when the main editors force a page limit on their subzeen editor, or keep hassling him to get his "copy" to you before you go to the printer's. As a result, Derek seems likely to go his own way at some point next year. In addition, Doug and my roles will change with my move to Edinburgh. We have been trying to sort out how we will work it, and it looks as though I'll be doing the putting it together—pre-printing—and Doug will be doing the post-printing stuff and cash handling.

Regarding burnout...I guess I'm going through a low phase at the moment, especially with regard to other zeens. I still have energy for *PoW!*, but less and less for others. Maybe it's because I'm playing in fewer games, or just that I'm getting bored with the rest of the hobby...!! There are still a few zeens worth getting for the reading—*HoL*, *Costa*, *BI*—has a fourth issue ever appeared?

In a way I hoped that my move to Edinburgh might allow me a little more time to myself to do other things, or develop ideas. In addition, as you may have read, I'm thinking of getting a Mac, and thought a six-month break might give me a chance to experiment with new stuff on the Mac (but I haven't got it yet).

[Clearly, flexibility and mutual support are the whole idea between teamwork. The members of the team must be prepared over time to assume changing

roles and different levels of involvement in the production of the zeen if the zeen is to last.

[By the same token, a single-man production will last longer if the publisher and his zeen evolve together, instead of the publisher feeling his zeen must live up to some previous or outside standard.]

(PETE GAUGHAN) I think there must be two types of burnout — one where you're tired of doing something (such as I get with school, work, and paying bills), and another where you're *sick* and tired. The latter would involve disgust or anger over the way things are going. A good feud ignites the "sick and tired" type, while boredom or lack of time seems to cause the first type.

[Which is the opposite of love: hate, or indifference? Being sick and tired of something might lead you to do something about it, whereas mere boredom will almost surely lead to apathy and inaction. I don't call it burnout until you give up caring. Do more people burn out from feuds, or just the passage of time?]

## Census

(SIMON BILLENNESS) The *Black & Blue Book* is a good idea which seems to have grown into a monstrosity. Unfortunately it seems that Larry and Mike have put too much work into the Book's add-on features whilst not paying enough attention to ensure that all the names and addresses are up-to-date. The last copy I received contained details of zeens and services, which is a bit wasteful considering you can find the same information in the *Zeen Register*. I notice that Larry was planning to include Europe in the next *BBB!* I feel this is expanding the Book just for the sake of expansion. How does including European addresses encourage face-to-face contact? Perhaps the next edition should just concentrate on the basics: hobbyists' names and addresses in North America. If some of the superfluous items are chopped, the *BBB* would make an excellent census. Maybe Larry and Conrad should get together on this one.

[Now there's a team for you.

[It is difficult to keep addresses up-to-date, as much as people move. A yearly publication such as this at best has moderate usefulness as an address list. You seem to regard the main purpose of the *BBB* to be encouraging face-to-face contact, but what is the purpose of the census?]



## Costs

(PETE GAUGHAN) The non-profit application is still in the works. They told me three months, it's been four. Sigh.

[This zeen has been six months in the works—surely the application has come through by now?]

(MELINDA HOLLEY) Kinko's is who I was (and still am) dealing with. I had a long talk with the manager after I discovered I'd been charged two different prices for issues (about six months apart) which were the exact same size. Now I have an itemized list of charges and rates as well as a formula of how they apply to each issue. I can figure up the charges on my own and see how they compare to what I get charged. As an added service, I call the manager (once I see how many pages I have and how many copies I need). She figures the charges and we compare them. So far, they've tallied almost to the penny. I guess the "moral" is to be sure to keep a very close eye on what each issue costs and compare it to previous ones. The problem here is that Kinko's is the only game in town.

I made up my mind a long time ago that I'd never be rich because I enjoy spending money too much. I *like* buying things. I suffer from the Tammy Bakker-Imelda Marcos-Michele Duvalier Syndrome, I suppose. I take heart from a fortune-teller who once told me that I would never need to worry about money...that I'd always have enough when necessary. I'm a fatalist, I guess.

[Ah, Kinko's. They never charged us the right price either, but it was almost always way too low, so we didn't mention it when they occasionally overcharged, as well. Now, of course, we have our own copier, which should pay for itself in about four months, even at Kinko's rates, barring any other major repairs.]

(ROBERT SACKS) I wrote the comment in #13 before the scandal broke! Actually, I'm no longer very happy with the copier, and I'm calling the vendor tomorrow about the increasing percentage of bad copies.

[Well, you're probably happy with the copier again by now. *Lord of Hosts* turned out great. We are fairly pleased with the Minolta 530R we picked up at an auction. Very good copies.]

(DAVE MCCRUMB) The cost for putting

out *TAG* is about 62¢ per copy (22¢ mail + 40¢ copying). This does not include reductions or larger than normal issues. So for a normal issue, I make a 4¢ profit. Printer ribbon, tape, staples, and printer paper quickly eat this up.

One way I have managed to keep costs down is to get to know the manager of our local Kinko's. John is fascinated by Diplomacy (but hasn't decided to play yet) and insists on running off *TAG* himself. He reads it as he does, and I have since found a copy of it is normally passed around. John lets me do most reductions free (25¢ per, normally) and usually gives me a 10% discount. It costs me 15-20 minutes of bs-ing twice a month, but it is worth it.

*Abattoir* costs about 70¢ per copy, but it is done on higher quality paper and sent overseas air mail. I'm still in the black here, but since I charge a game fee and no sub fee, I expect to eventually lose much more than was charged. No big deal. If I wanted to make money, I wouldn't publish a Diplomacy zeen.

[So the manager passes around your zeen, eh? Well, I guess that explains those extra votes you got in the Runestone Poll.]

(MARK NELSON) When one thinks about it, I don't think that the costs of pubbing are that much, unless you're using very expensive methods. Consider what you'd be doing if you weren't pubbing. You've got other interests, haven't you? Yes, and these other interests would involve the spending of money, wouldn't they? However, pubbing requires the regular spending of money, hence seems a big drain, whilst many other hobbies would spend a large-ish amount of money in one go, thus seeming to be more worthwhile. For students/those on a low income, hence Michael Hopcroft and myself, it can take a tremendously large percentage of one's income...but only because your income is so low!! The most important thing is to find a cheap method of getting the zeens copied, and it helps if it's fairly quick as well. There are, by the way, only two zeens in the UK which are known actually to make a profit. Both of them are run by a guy who earlier in his hobby life dropped out of a load of games in a zeen which was rumored to be making a profit...don't perceptions change? One way of getting your money back is to charge a gamefee (cough, splutter). Or charge a deposit, where you'll keep that if someone drops out of a game. Encourage people to keep a minimum sub.

[Yes, it's funny how perceptions change. The



whole business about custodians not charging mandatory fees came about because of a hue and cry raised a decade ago when a custodian *did* charge mandatory fees. But nowadays, many people think this concern is ridiculous.

[I suppose that people who find it hard to live within their means will also find it hard to publish within their means.]

## Custodians

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** Just read the letter from Michael Hopcroft regarding the arguments between Davis and Sacks. I think you screwed up. You should simply have told him to ignore both of them, all the bullshit, and gone on and done whatever he felt like doing. We have had lots of powerful people in the hobby get upset because they weren't followed or because they got their feathers ruffled. So what, not a one has ever really had the strength to push anyone out. This would especially be the case if the target ignored the bullshit and simply went on with what he wanted to do. This hobby is pretty much of anarchy where people go their own way; there is no reason for anyone to put with petty asinine bullshit from anyone.

[I think Michael is quite capable of figuring that out for himself. He didn't ask what he should do—he only asked that his story be printed. We decided it was revealing and amusing and worth printing.]

**(JOHN CARUSO)** If a death threat was given as Robert Sacks claims (and as you now verify), then an apology/retraction is in order, I'd say.

To Michael Hopcroft—welcome to the world of Megadip. No matter which MNC you use or recognize, you will probably catch flak. It's not a problem that is unresolvable either, but it is a problem that no one really cares to resolve. Leaving it as is allows the megadippers something to battle over. I know, I'm trying to find a middle ground and am not getting very far.

To Robert Sacks—the BNC has already given a statement that he would not require a fee, and that his only requirement for assigning a number is correct names and addresses. So what is holding up the NYGB from giving the BNC the money that was allocated from the same NYGB?

Along the custodian line, I wonder what would happen if a custodian was to (pardon the abrupt way of saying it) drop dead tomorrow. Who would

appoint the new custodian if a successor isn't already lined up by the present custodian? I feel the most recent previous custodian (if active, and if not the next previous one, and so on) should select the next custodian. It would save a lot of trouble if some form of general mechanism was in place in case such an emergency occurred, or if a custodian just ceased functioning. I know I'm not the only one who feels strongly about this topic.

[Yes, that's the whole point of "registration" of projects: to set in place a general mechanism for the selection of a new custodian under such circumstances. One who also would not require a fee for assigning numbers.

[Fred Davis has indeed apologized, not so much for what he said as for how we took it. That's fine, we're glad to put this whole silly incident behind us. And nobody seemed to get the point, anyway.]

**(ROBERT SACKS)** Considering the history this hobby has with rigged elections, holding elections would be an invitation for more feuds and fraud.

Part of the philosophical basis for the dispute over the MNCship has to do with the nature of the office. An independent MNC is supposed to promote the variant sub-hobby. The variant banks' "MNC" merely promotes the variant banks at the expense of the variant sub-hobby, which is one of the reasons why the variant sub-hobby is comatose.

My comment about being unable to get the BNC to register was meant in a far more humorous vein than subsequent events have rendered it. John Caruso is attempting to resolve the situation.

[John does not seem to understand very well the situations he is attempting to resolve.]

**(SIMON BILLENNESS)** Alan Stewart defines the MNC/Covenant issue very succinctly. What is the extent of a custodian's power to bind his successors? Personally, I find the idea of a covenant, binding future custodians in perpetuity, ridiculous. Under that sort of precedent a custodian could engrave any policy in stone and force his successors to abide by it. What nonsense!

Since you say it doesn't matter which numbers you use, I'll just get my Miller Numbers from Fred Hyatt. In any case, Fred Hyatt does not charge for Numbers, so I don't think that Robert Sacks has any reason to complain.

[If Fred Hyatt drops dead tomorrow, can you tell us who will succeed him, Simon? What if it



turns out to be Elmer Hinton, and he decides to charge you ten bucks per number so that he can make a living out of being Miller Number Custodian? After all, he is a "professional" gamesmaster, publisher, and association, and can expect to be treated as such. MNC Bob Olsen is already setting mandatory fees of his own, no doubt to feed his presidential campaign fund, and his cat.]

**(BOB OLSEN)** Personally, I don't care if there is one Miller Number Custodian, two Miller Custodians, or six of them. In fact, why not let everybody give out his own MNs? Every man a king! Mr Hopcroft, your One and Only Official Miller Number is 1963-k7t3t02vb.23f00. (Sorry I'm a little late getting back to you.) That will be \$24.95, please. Mr Hopcroft's unfortunate experience in running a simple little variant is a pretty sad tale. My theory: anybody who makes threats should be invited to make good on them forthwith. "Make my day" generally sends the bullies scurrying for cover...

As to the Sacks-Davis debate, I have to favor Mr Sacks, if only because he once (okay, twice) hit Woody over the head with a beer can, whereas Mr Davis has (as far as I know) engaged in no such constructive hobby activity. Otherwise, I feel that Mr "Yahweh" Sacks and Mr "Deathwish" Davis (this monumental imbroglia reminds me of Professional Wrestling...without that sport's comparative dignity and intellectual content) compete on the (hyork) proverbial Level Playing Field. As Megadip contests go...this one should.

The idea of electing hobby "Custodians" is a nice one and in line with the democratic ideals many of us still cherish. However, I don't think it would work. It'd be *The Poll* all over again; one individual running for everything in sight and spewing out mass mailings of campaign literature, and my kinda folks deciding to express disdain for the whole silly process with a write-in campaign for somebody like Glenn Overby, or Olga, or (shudder) Woody. The present system is not perfect, but after all, the BNC position is the only one that's of any real importance, and even that could be done without in a pinch. As long as it's in good hands, everything's fine. I vote for keeping the present system (not, in that case, with my feet).

[I think the orphan services are the only ones that are of any real importance. It's more important that people have fun playing games than it is that they be rated at playing them.

["Every man a king!", eh? But only Bob Olsen for President!]

**(DAVE MCCRUMB)** Once again, somebody is trying to split the hobby apart. The New England Regional Diplomacy Senate has tried to steal our newest hobby office, the Zarse Number Custodianship, from its rightful owner. We discussed this during the latest meeting of the Sinking Creek Association of the National Diplomacy Action League (SCANDAL) and passed a resolution condemning NERDS for their actions. An amendment to censor the members of DUMP and PUB for failure to stop the illegal actions by NERDS was also passed. We reaffirmed Jeff Zarse as the ZNC, but since we were aware of his desire to avoid controversy, appointed a new ZNC. Unfortunately, this person does not want the personal attacks usually associated with a custodianship, and so will be anonymous. They will be referred to as Alfred Kitsch in all ZNC-related announcements.

[At the recent Maryland Union of Dipsters meeting, we voted to support SCANDAL's position one hundred per cent, taking even more radical positions if possible—just to make SCANDAL more palatable to the masses. That's right, SCANDAL can put MUD anywhere it wants it.]

**(JIM BURGESS)** I want to state categorically and emphatically for the record that Jeff Zarse is definitely the Zarse Number Custodian. I asked him for a number and everything. (Of course, he didn't give me one, but that's irrelevant.) Just as strongly I want to deny to Stephen Dorneman that I am a member of *any* DIPDOM organization, especially including this fictional "Providence Union of Boobs." I spend a goodly amount of time in PUBs, but almost never in Providence. Furthermore, I would like to call for "mega-death threats" on this Stephen Dorneman person. If I could get my hands around the penguin's neck, I'd strangle him until...well, you know!

[All too well.]

**(MARK NELSON)** In the UK, the current custodian more-or-less decides on his successor. There might be a discussion about candidates and their relative merits, but in the end, the holder decides. I suppose that it's lucky that the main Hobby Masters get on together and that there aren't that many personality clashes. Could this be due to the fact that everyone in the UK can meet several times a year at various Cons; there aren't that many travelling problems over here!! Since it's harder for US hobby people to meet FTF, are personality



problems more likely to arise? Once you start to officialize things, you start to need rules and regulations, and before you know where you are you've turned the hobby into zeen wars—a game based on the events occurring towards the end of the Roman Republic. Real zeens? Easy one, they all run Diplomacy.

If Michael Hopcroft were to reread *HOL*, I'm sure he'd find that Hobby Politics are much more interesting than anything "real life" can come up with!!

NYGB = New York ? ?

And what is a Zarse?

You mean that you have to pay for a BN!!! Are we serious here??? Whatever for?

[NYGB = New York Game Board. A Zarse is a mythical creature, looks like a *Furball* and is known for bringing out the Baddest in Boys.

[Do you mean to say that a Boardman Number isn't worth paying for?

[FTF contact may indeed help ease the personality clashes in Dipdom. I've certainly found that many people who are bastards in the mail are pleasant or at least inoffensive in person. On the other hand, some people I've liked through the mail, I've liked a lot less in person. Overall, I would say it's harder to get away with being a jerk FTF.]

## Dipcon

(PETER SULLIVAN) Oh, so Caruso was one of those USAF Airman who were "Over-paid, Over-sexed, and Over Here," was he? Does Kathy know? \*heh heh\* As for Worldcon, I don't see why people are saying they won't come and play Diplomacy because they'd rather come and "see the sights." Heck, come over for two or more weeks and do both! I wouldn't expect anyone to fly over just for the convention weekend itself. I may well move my summer house-con to either the week before or after the main event to see if I can attract a few Americans as well.

(ROBERT SACKS) "Worldcon" is a registered service mark of the World Science Fiction Society. The 1987 Worldcon (the 45th) was Conspiracy '87, held August 27-September 1 in Brighton England. The 1988 Worldcon is Nolacon II, September 1-5 in New Orleans. The 1989 Worldcon is Noreascon Three, August 31-September 4 in Boston. The 1990 Worldcon is ConFiction, August 23-27 in The Hague. Please do not refer to any other convention as a "Worldcon."

Due to scheduling idiocies on the part of

Atlanticon, Dipcon '88 is directly opposite Atlanticon '88 (including the Diplomatic Congress of Baltimore of 1988) and a science fiction convention I am working on in the NYC area. I am looking for people to run the Diplomatic Congress. As a side deal, if the people supporting a World Dipcon don't stop calling it "Worldcon," I'll start calling the Diplomatic Congress, Marycon, Peericon, and every other diplomacy convention that comes along "Dipcon."

(JOHN CARUSO) I disagree with Simon Billenness. I still feel a Worldcon every year rotating among four different areas of the world is better than one every two years among three to five areas. A two-year gap doesn't mean people will save up their money to fly all over the world. Besides, I thought the idea was to try to bring the international con to everyone, not to guarantee that the egomaniac who wants to go to every Worldcon can do so more easily by spacing them two years apart. I don't see where it matters if 400 people show or 40 people show. Granted, you strive to get as many people as possible, and from as many different places as possible, but the overall object of a Worldcon should be to promote fun and meeting people. It stands to reason, more people can meet more other people if they have more opportunities to do so. And being every year, Worldcon might discourage the "cliquish" atmosphere of the same people attending all of the cons, all of the time. Worldcon should be for all—not for special interest groups.

However, I do agree with Simon that some kind of Charter should be implemented to help regulate the Worldcon rotation, if nothing else. Peter Sullivan is mistaken in believing that the charter would have to be legally binding in both the US and UK. In fact, it would and should be legally binding in neither. What the charter should be is a Worldcon guide—a diplomacy hobby-only charter, followed by those at Worldcon, amendable by a majority (or something similar) vote at two consecutive Worldcon meetings. The two consecutive Dipcons to amend the charter works well here. It prevents one area from amending the charter in favor of one area or group of people. It's sort of like having a bill in our Congress that must pass both houses of Congress. I have found that when a small group of self-appointed or -elected "friends" get together, there is room for corruption, rigging, and dishonesty. Better to leave the charter to the entire group of people that attends a meeting, with the small group running the con acting as chairpersons. To combine my two ideas—I'd have Worldcon run every year the first two Worldcons, in order to pass



a charter and let the people of the two meetings decide if they would like to see Worldcon every year or every other year. After all, Worldcon is the people's con. Not just the Brits con or the special con for the egomaniacs or special interest groups.

[I certainly hope for all the effort that's going into this thing that more than 40 people show. I don't see the point in holding a regular Dipcon somewhere that no more than 40 people, with a goodly percentage of them being "non-local," are going to show. As I recall, this was one of the main objections against the Texas Dipcon. What was the final turnout there (I forget)?

[How can we have a Charter that will bind our successor World Dipcons to what we say? No one will buy that idea.]

**(DAVE MCCRUMB)** How can we get *Globetrotter*? I am interested in attending Worldcon next year. I will be in Britain and could probably arrange it for that time period.

As I understand it, the Dipcon Charter has legal binding only as much as the charter for any small private group, in other words, none. It is a set of guidelines to promote fairness and cooperation.

[I think this is a good understanding of what any "World Dipcon Charter" should be.]

**(MARK NELSON)** I don't really see the need for this Charter business for World Dip Con. As I see it, World Dip Con (WDC) should be held every two years. WDC is a means for the different hobbies to meet and mingle. Yearly would reduce the number of potential visitors; a year gap gives people time to save up and gives the other side time to organize their side of it. Europe hosts it one time and the States the next. At the moment, there is no other possible World site. I say this because a prerequisite would be a strong, healthy hobby with contacts in both other camps. I also class England and Europe together. In the States, there are two options: i) The site of Dipcon = World Dip Con; or, ii) Any site may hold World Dip Con, but another prerequisite is that the organizers have had experience organizing cons.

Since the mingling of two or more separate sets of hobbies is the purpose, the site chosen must be one accessible to both of them. Any choice of site would have to be one which other interested parties outside the host area could reach.

Why should Brits want WDC in Europe? Good grief, man, they don't have the sense to teach English as the native language!!!

To decide the site of World Dip Con in the States, the suggestion of a Custodian sounds fine. Perhaps, though, a few other members would make things easier. Say three natives and one Englander (Biggles would be the obvious choice). This group of upright citizens could then thrash it all out together. Great.

[What seems obvious to you is not necessarily agreed on by everyone else, hence the idea of the Charter. For instance, I think that England can stand alone as a potential site, with the rest of Europe as a separate site. Joining World Dipcon with the already politicized North American Dipcon could be a fatal mistake for the World Dipcon. And a "Custodian" or "group of upright citizens" to decide the American site? Get real!]

**(RAN BEN-ISRAEL)** It has generally been agreed that Dipcon cannot go to Britain (hence the idea for Worldcon) because it is the premier *North American* con. Well, my question to you and everyone else is: do you really believe Canada will be allowed to host Dipcon? I get the impression that Dipcon won't be allowed north across the border. I do hope I am wrong.

Alan Stewart mentioned that there is a 33% chance of a Canadian bid for Dipcon in the near future. I think the chances will be greater than that if CanCon in Toronto next August is a success.

[And I would guess that there is a 33% chance of a Canadian bid succeeding if there is one. In other words, I wouldn't bet on Dipcon going to Canada for a while. Of course, now that we've said it here, somebody will probably try their hardest to prove us wrong. So maybe this plug will work after all.]

**(SIMON BILLENNESS)** Diplomacy Worldcon seems to be progressing well. Allan Calhamer, apparently, has accepted the invitation to be the guest of honour, so the committee will be flying him over and putting him up for free. I reckon a cut-price trip to Europe is one of the best ways to honour him for inventing the game in the first place.

The convention will take place in Birmingham at the same venue as last year: High Hall. Around 250 hobbyists turned up last year, so this time the convention should attract 300 with additional foreigners and British people turning up to see Calhamer. The tournament itself is the largest in Britain, and there are plenty of other events such as board games and even five-a-side American football!

There's a suggestion that British hobbyists join in an "Adopt-A-Yank" scheme and put up an



American or two during their visit, which sounds like a lot of fun. I'm handling the American publicity and organisation for the event. I'm hoping to hear from anyone interested in going, so that I can send them progress reports, directions, and hopefully somebody in Britain who's prepared to put them up.

Oh, the dates? July 15-18, with a possible extension to July 19th.

[Best of luck in pulling this off. The "Adopt-A-Yank" scheme is an excellent idea—makes it much more worth going. Remember that those promised group discount air-fares should be arranged as soon as possible so we can all make plans! Historically, group air-fares have had trouble getting off the ground. The Texas Dipcon crew tried to arrange cheap fares, but the idea generated little interest and eventually fell through.]

## Diptax

(JIM BURGESS) My general impression on hobby services funding (dare I say it?) is that we are, if anything, overfunded. I just passed \$140 some odd to Pete Gaughan of Orphan Service money. Given Rod's philosophical differences in how to run it (a non-activist style much as you, Dick, seem to recommend), Rod can live on those funds for quite some time. Historically, the BNC has been underfunded relative to the Orphan Service, and I note from the last *Everything* that Heinowski is now in the black. Good. Steve Emmert is right. A Diptax is probably unnecessary today. PDORA is much more fun. There is not a snowball's chance in hell that Rod will use up the Orphan Service funds unless he pubs a zeen, and after doing YVSC, I'm not sure that was the best use of the funds. As Peter Gaughan can attest (I sent him the records), I absorbed much of the costs of YVSC myself.

[I agree wholeheartedly with you that hobby services are overfunded. Most of them aren't any great "service" anyway, and as long as they are being run by people of reasonable frugality, there is no reason why they will not continue to be overfunded just by PDORA and voluntary contributions alone. The question then becomes: how can we give it back? A good, interesting zeen might be one way. In that case, maybe YVSC wasn't such a waste after all.

[Rod has put out something called *Gehenna*, but it was more of a one-page letter than a zeen.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Is it traditional to send a buck to the BNC? I imagine so, but I haven't done it yet, and Steve Heinowski hasn't asked me about it. Maybe with my next opening... Actually it probably wouldn't cost that much to be a number custodian. Postage mainly, and all that filing. What I don't understand is whether a Custodian has to give up playing. Would I have an advantage if I were playing Gunboat and "just happen" to be the MNC? I would certainly know a lot more about the game than the other players!

All this talk about Diptax got me worried a little while ago, because I had not sent the customary donation to the BNC when I got my Boardman number. At the time I didn't know about it. So I wrote Steve and asked about it (that's why the personal note space on zeens is so useful), and he told me not to sweat it. But I have another gamestart coming up and I'll make it up to him when that happens. The BNC needs to have some money coming in, after all. I also plan to do my part by donating a (hopefully) rare role-playing game to the PDO Auction, as well as a couple of videocassettes on which I appear. Once you've been an actor, there are no limits to your ability to make a fool of yourself in public.

[Your self-sacrificing devotion to the promotion of hobby services serves as a shining example to us all.

[No, a custodian does not have to give up playing; I happen to know that Fred Hyatt is playing in a gunboat game right now. I even offered to give the game a number, thereby avoiding the conflict of interest mentioned above, but the GM was afraid that it would cause a different sort of conflict of interest, so as far as I know, he's using no number at all. That's just fine too, because after all, the main thing is to play games and enjoy them. Why should Fred be left out of all the fun?]

(JOHN CARUSO) Glad you didn't jump all over me and take me to task over my statement that Sacks gives money to six "hobby custodians" and that he is four of those positions. Obviously, my letter was outdated, because in the interim, Robert appointed Julie as his personal MNC, reducing the Sacks number to three custodianships.

[I'm not Robert's personal MNC; he shares me with anyone else who wants me.]

(MARK NELSON) A Diptax seems a strange idea, and since I don't really know what it's all about, I can't say too much. But I can't really see



why services should be funded from a Diptax. Cut costs, charge what you need to, and get other zeen editors to help as much as possible. I see that you are already considering privatising the MNC. With two Custodians in competition, things should become cheaper as they undercut each other—shouldn't they?

[Let's hear it for free enterprise! Other custodians take note—we can afford to undercut *all* the competition!]

(ROBERT SACKS) Mr Caruso can vacillate as to what services are Dipdom's, but the NYGB does not vacillate as to what services are the Hobby's. We also do not want the Hobby Services to cease to be independent. Registration is intended to preserve independence, not terminate it. The linkage for funding *MoD* to the BNC not registering was the action of a democratic group, and therefore not explicable by myself. The entire purpose of supporting the Hobby Services was to avoid mandatory fees—something which claims the rights to charge mandatory fees is not a hobby service and is not eligible for funding. *MoD* both is and is not an exception: the \$1 does not pay for the publication, the Hobby Service is the (new) Novice Project, not its publication (a quibble), and *MoD* (like the OGP/KGO/NYGB Zeen Directory) is a specifically endorsed and supported publication. In order to comply with the tax law, all hobby services receiving money through the NYGB are *ex officio* members of the NYGB Diplomacy Hobby Services Division, and Registration is the method the NYGB uses to avoid even the appearance of appointing Hobby Officers. There is a requirement that such *ex officio* members not misrepresent the NYGB, which Linsey and Quinn deliberately flouted. Registration minimally entails providing the NYGB with almost mechanical procedures for determining who the custodian is: the names of the vice custodians, the method for filling vacancies if there is no vice custodian, and the method and causes for determining challenges to the custodian. I only control two services which draw funds, and one of those is due to Billenness' insisting on separate funding for the *KGO'ZD*. We are committed to the MNC under the Covenant, and the funding does not carry over to the NAVB when they attempted to seize the office; we are committed to the Orphan Games Project, and the funding does not carry over to the USOS when it broke away to place games which are not orphans; we are committed to *Known Games Openings*, and the funding does not carry over to *DW* or the *Zeen Register* when

they attempted to seize, usurp, or control the office; we are committed to *Masters of Deceit* and *KGO'ZD* instead of *Supernova* and *Zeen Register*, and we committed at the same time and for the same reasons that Mr Caruso did—he's since changed his mind for political reasons, while we're bound by the procedures we've established.

[It's interesting to me that Dipdom spits on the "professional GMs" who charge money for the service of running games, really our hobby's most basic service, yet sees no problem with charging for other less useful and less tangible "services." Somebody please tell me what's so crucial about having Boardman Numbers for games. Are they really worth a buck (or more) apiece?]

[I have been challenged as to whether I would find it "entertaining" if people screwed up the census with fake address lists or the Boardman Numbers with fake game starts. Well, either I would find it "entertaining" or else I really wouldn't care. Both have been done before. The "services" live on. The real challenge is making them worth what we pay for them. My measure of value is: does the service help us play and enjoy games?]

## Filing Systems

(JIM BURGESS) Mine ranks with the worst of them. I've finally started seriously throwing things away. I've got many boxes of old zeens and letters stuffed in the attic of my building. There are six apartments in the building, and Charlotte and I take up more than half the attic. Oh well. I like Pete Gaughan's list of what to keep. One of the reasons I don't throw everything away is because I still love to look up old *Inner Light*, *NSWG*, and *Dip by Moonlight(s)*. All three editors get all my publications free for as long as I can keep track of them. On the other hand, I can never find issues of Eric's wife's zeen, *Cathy's Ramblings*, for the life of me. The filing system stinks.

[Our old zeens and letters take up half the tiny unfinished part of our basement in our new house. But *Inner Light* is precious and lives in the filing cabinet.]

(DAVE MCCRUMB) Now that I have had my computer for several months, I am working out a new system. I input moves twice a week as I receive them. Adjudication takes a little longer than paper since I don't use a map, but I still haven't made any movement errors. My biggest problem is missing retreat options.



I can usually get *TAG* out in 3-4 days. There are exceptions, such as this issue, but I usually know about them in advance and warn the players. The computer has made me less space-conscious, and I frequently have extra space, but the cartoons do help break the monotony.

(**MARK NELSON**) My own filing system is very simple. After I've read a zeen, copied out any articles from it, and written to the editor, it goes into the system. A5 zeens go on a bookcase as per books (A-Z), and A4 zeens go on the bookcase of top of each other. Have rows and rows of bookcases all over the walls. Fine.

[All of our bookcases have books on them. No good. Must toss books, keep zeens.]

## Finding New Subbers

(**MARK NELSON**) Getting new subbers is a chore, but a necessary one, otherwise the same old names enter all the games and the same old letter writers write in. One of the best ways to attract new subbers is to have produced 20+ copies of a zeen, in which case people think that it must be worth getting if it's lasted that long. I've never found that reviews in zeens has brought me good response; people seem more willing to the human touch or a sample copy.

[That sounds like some of the businesses over here: they won't accept a check numbered less than "200." Fools—I got 500 checks when I opened the account. So I start with 200, big deal. Any check kiter can do the same.]

[Reviews probably don't do much good because they are mostly of the lukewarm, backpatting, one hand washes the other kind anyway. You need some real *advertising*.]

(**WALLACE NICOLL**) Currently, our subber level is growing slowly, heading towards the 115-120 mark—we get a trickle of newcomers and very few dropouts. I recently put an A4 poster and a couple of samples in a local gameshop, but so far have had no response.

[Have you thought about doing a video?]

(**JIM BURGESS**) I concur about the low response to unsolicited mailings. I sent out over 100 samples to a couple of sets of "Fresh Meat" from *HOL* when I started *The Abyssinian Prince*. I

got precisely two responses. The first never wrote a second time, and I've since dropped him from my sub list. The second was Michael Hopcroft (sound familiar?), and it took him about three months to write back. I'm up to sixty on my mailing list, and I'm looking to lose people so I lose less money, but that's another story. I even wrote a nice introductory letter sent with all the samples — didn't help a bit.

[Those mailings weren't exactly unsolicited—"Fruit Loops" does consist of people who have recently inquired about Dipdom. But now you say you're looking to lose people, so you must have gained some somewhere. What happened?]

(**PETE GAUGHAN**) My sub list has gone over fifty for the first time, ever, and has stayed over for three months. Therefore I am resigning (once again!) my post as Generalissimo of the Hobby Small-Fry Protection League. More in *Pere*.

[Oh boy, Generalissima under the Covenant! Sounds good to me! When do I take over?]

## G Ming Procedure

(**BOB OLSEN**) Everyone seems disappointed by Mr Heinowski's ruling in the WAP matter, but I think we should give him some slack. Most likely he knows quite well—surely it's been pointed out to him—that every BNC eventually gets fitted out with an albatross of some sort or other. Mr Ditter had your own R3 of fond memory; Ms Byrne had 83AY and the burning question of Electronic Mail Games (funny how the Issue disappeared the minute she left the post...); Mr Quinn had 83AY, Mr Sacks and Mr Hinton. Who can blame Mr Heinowski for trying to avoid getting saddled with endless nonsense? If he rules one way, the Issue will never be allowed to end; if he rules the other way, some people won't be satisfied but that will be the end of it (but perhaps he doesn't know that). As a semi-professional vacillator...I like his style.

As for WAP, my main objection parallels Mr Lischett's: this rule seems to me to encourage poor play, specifically NMRs. From a purely selfish viewpoint, since I at least get my orders in (that's as close as I come to diplomatic adroitness), WAP favors my opponents rather than me, so what good is it? Anyway, I want to play Diplomacy against people—not automatic pilots.

["Semi-professional vacillator"...that's the new euphemism for "wimp," eh? I can blame Mr



Heinowski for being a wimp. If we're going to revere his service and give him gobs of money to do it, the least he can do is make a decent decision, one way or another.

["Automatic pilots"...weren't they the ones that were "Overpaid, Over-Sexed, and Over There"?]

**(JOHN CARUSO)** Mark Berch still fails to see the point I was trying to make regarding his WAP. With regard to perpetual orders and general orders, it is the player who has ordered the GM to use this method of order writing. In the case of WAP, it is the GM telling the player which set of orders he (the GM) will use. It may be a HR and one that was agreed to before the game started by all of the players, but it is a rule that indirectly allows the GM to perform a function of a player in the game. The player didn't order the units to use WAP. The GMs HR is doing that. And if the player happens to state ahead of time, "Please use WAP rule is I NMR," he could just as easily have stated, "Please use my previous season's orders if I NMR," facilitating the perpetual orders option. WAP does not provide another viable option for the players at all. All it does is allow the GM to get involved in the game and with the movements of the units. Something the GM shouldn't be looking to do.

[I think you've hit the nail on the head yet again, but it doesn't matter how many times you hit it, it's not going through Berch's head.]

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** I think I screwed up when I brought up my game under Boardman last issue. I never said Boardman changed a rule. I brought it up to make a point about even a minor houserule change, one of your subjects last issue. It is relatively accepted (though you wouldn't know it by at least one argument you were lucky enough to witness) that a GM confirming a player's yes vote in a draw is a minor point. The facts that I was trying to bring out were as follows (the game was *not* an orphan):

- 1) I had made it public in a DIAS game that I would continue to vote no to a draw proposal until a fifth player was eliminated.

- 2) When the fifth player was eliminated, I changed my vote to yes; however, the draw continued to fail.

- 3) The German player convinced his English ally that I was still voting the draw down.

- 4) The English player decided to hand the German a win on a silver platter because he was convinced that I was still being unreasonable.

- 5) The German got a solo win in the game, a

well-deserved one at that.

The point I was trying to make was that changing a houserule to allow publication of a vote, a very minor houserule change, would have turned a solo win into a four-way draw. My point was that any houserule change, no matter how minor, can affect the game in a major way.

[For sure. Now the question becomes: should the game be declared "irregular" (if indeed we care about such things) because the houserule change has the potential to affect the game, or do we have to wait until it actually "needlessly ruins another game"?]

**(MARK NELSON)** An interesting GM problem. If the GM has not published a set of houserules, should he be forced to adjudicate a game solely according to the Dip Rules (1971 is the standard set here)? Or should he be allowed to introduce houserules when he adjudicates a game without giving the players prior knowledge? In my view, a GM should adjudicate solely by the rules of the game if he has no houserules, and if he doesn't, the game should be declared irregular. A trivial example (you may think) follows. The following order was declared invalid and illegal: F(GOB)-StP. Yet according to the rules of the game, this order is legal and the GM must accept it. Since the GM has not published any houserules, he is in effect changing the rules of the game without telling the players, and hence the game should be deprived of its UK BN. Don't you agree?

I don't like WAP at all. To my mind it constitutes GM interference and is unfair towards players who do send orders in. To the solution would be: After an NMR, a standby is asked to submit orders. If the original players does not send orders in a second time, the standby player's orders are used and he replaces the original player. In addition, if you are using standbys, you must use them all the time and not only for powers with more than a certain minimum number of centers. If you don't, you are being inconsistent. I certainly wouldn't play in a game using WAP.

On the question of draws, I don't think that the particular votes for any proposal should be printed—only the numbers in favor/against/abstained. If you want to tell the world, write to them. By publishing particular votes, you prevent certain kinds of stabs and tactical plays. For instance, take a game with the following sc distribution: 10-7-5-4-4-2-2. If I'm on 7, I vote against any proposal and shift the blame onto the 10 sc man. I'm hoping to be able to set up the others



against him whilst setting myself up to take several of them out. After all, the logical vote against would have been his. Now if my vote is published, I'm not going to get far. (The above is not regardless of position, but merely the kind of thing which may occur.) Not printing the votes of each player publicly enhances the game in my opinion. And I've been done [?] at tournaments where draw proposals are voted on publicly. I particularly like encouraging people that I'm content with a five-way draw, then voting against it, and then pointing out that we can force a four-way draw...which I can't do very easily when votes are known.

By the way, I don't think that a four-way draw should be rated better than a seven-way draw (such a notion is ridiculous), merely that most people fall for it and increase my chances of winning.

If someone NMRs in Spring, 1901, the obvious choice is to hold over the game and get a new player straight away. Is there any particular reason why this option hasn't been thought of? Why use "neutral orders," you're only storing up potential trouble.

Talking of dud ideas, "Jackdaw Numbers" for FTF games strike me as pointless, as it did when I first found out about it. Look, you can't give numbers to every FTF game, just a select few. "Mainly BUDS," Pete says, showing why the idea is a waste of time on anything but a local level—so why try to set it up on a National Scale?

However, on to an interesting situation: that in *Graustark* where something would appear to be drastically wrong. A GM cannot print an adjudication before a deadline and he cannot print sets of orders which have been replaced by another set. Not only is discrimination occurring, because if I sent orders in and corrected them before the game was adjudicated they wouldn't appear, but players are being disadvantaged. In answer to your question: yes, the BNC should have the power to take the BN away. Just because someone has got away with doing something he shouldn't have been doing in the past is no reason to prevent it happening again. Just think if such logic was applied in the "real" world!!! Any why do you suggest that a GM should be allowed to get away with things just because it allows him to turn his zeen around quicker!! No, I feel that the situation is quite clear, players are being discriminated against.

[Are you saying that a BN should be taken away after it's been given? Over here, it's either not given in the first place, when it looks like the game might be irregular if run, or else if a number has already been given and the game becomes irregular, it retains the number, but is marked "irregular."

[Funny that you'd like to take Boardman Numbers away from John Boardman, GM and publisher of *Graustark*, and, needless to say, inventor of the Boardman Numbers.

[Why not "Jackdaw Numbers"? Some people get off on such things. Who cares if they're useless, unless you're planning to make people pay for them, in which case you've got an entirely different situation on your hands.]

(BOB GOSSAGE) I'm not sure that my comments will be accepted since I have never GMed a game of postal Diplomacy in my life, but here goes: I think that Mark Berch's WAP system of handling NMRs has its own merit, and I'm glad that it's catching on, for I feel that this hobby thrives on diversity. However, if I were GMing today, I would not use it. I believe that it is changing a fundamental part of the game by giving the GM the power to order the units. (Yes, the orders were written by the player, but not for that season, making them—in my opinion—invalid.) I believe that really the only valid answer to an NMR is the one in the rulebook—All Units Hold. Or, in the case of a Spring '01 NMR, delay the game and call for a standby.

[If you think Dipdom thrives on diversity in the form of GM interference in games, you would have loved Bernie Oaklyn...]

## Out of Dipdom

(PETE GAUGHAN) When people ask about Dip, I usually use the "Diplomacy is to Risk as chess is to checkers" analogy. But more often, they are *only* asking about my zeen ("Say, what's that?"), and I say, "Oh, this is a newsletter I publish for a hobby of mine, playing games by mail." That last phrase catches a lot of attention and helps describe the zeen better than a Dip-only answer would.

[I don't think Diplomacy is anything like Risk, but then again, I don't think chess is anything like checkers, either.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) One of these days, when I'm old, tired, and in a bad mood, I just might write a novel about my experiences in Dipdom. Once I develop enough of them, of course. I already have the first few chapter's worth of battle scars!



FRP by mail...yes, I do that. I run DOCTOR WHO games by mail through *Intervention* and *(Time) Lording It*, and a superhero game in *NUTMGS*. Both need more players. I play in Cathy Ozog's "Orknaire" game, but her turnaround is even slower than mine. Then there's PARANOIA by mail... I think postal role-playing is a very worthwhile activity, which can be a lot of fun if you do it properly. How do you do it properly? I think I'm still learning the basic techniques. One is to emphasize characterization and their activities. In my DOCTOR WHO game, the player controls a whole adventuring party (in this case, one of the Doctors Who and his companions at whatever time the players are running) It always seems to happen that the characters get separated, then the player has to run each thread. It can create some interesting effects. Getting players together on a joint adventure is more difficult; I'll probably be trying it fairly soon in SUPERDIPPERS once I get enough player-characters to form a decent hero team. What'll probably happen is that the "team" adventure will be run concurrently with whatever plot lines the characters are already running. (After all, if the Batman can run three plot lines at a time in the comics, so can the Dagger and Mr Toad...). It will be as if each character has his own "book," and then there's the team "book." Each turn then becomes an "issue" in the "book."

But number-crunching mechanics don't really work. I personally like to improvise fight scenes based on what sort of tactics my players want to use. And character creation I like to either leave up to my players or pre-generate. The Dagger, played by Cathy Ozog, is an example of the latter; I built the character around giving Cathy Speed powers. Stephen Dorneman, on the hand, created Mr Toad using the DC HEROES system pretty much exactly. My own preference is a mixture of DC HEROES, VILLAINS AND VIGILANTES, and the Marvel Advanced Set. I then translate the results to the "common system" (in this case, DC HEROES with some alterations) and get going.

[I tried playing PARANOIA by mail under Tom Swider. Cathy was in the game too. Unfortunately, it seemed the game fell into the same kind of trap that too many Diplomacy games fall into: hardly any negotiation between the players after the initial moves. This gets back to Jim Burgess: how can a GM promote interest in the game without interfering in the game?]

(PETER SULLIVAN) It's amazing how many people have played Risk, and it's certainly one

of the easiest ways of explaining what Diplomacy is all about. I managed to talk myself into University by discovering that the Tutor for Admissions had played Risk and explaining the Hobby and my place in it to him during my "Personality Interview."

[And now you can use the Walkerdine Archive to research your thesis.]

(MELINDA HOLLEY) I tried to explain Diplomacy to my sister once. She has a very logical mind...not to mention being paranoid to boot. I always did think she'd make a good player. I explained the tactical part of the game and the objective. She looked confused until I explained you could use deception and lying in order to achieve your objectives. I also illustrated a classic stab. Then she looked a little interested and said, "You mean it's a game of real life?"

[Did you mention my name in the "classic stab"?]

## Polls

(MARK NELSON) From the talk on the poll, I gather that the Runestone Poll was merely calculated according to an average vote? Such a system has been tried in the UK, but I don't like it because a few grudge votes can cause a great deal of damage. It has always struck me that the best way to do a Zeen Poll would be to use a combination of various different methods (last year Piggot used a Preference Matrix and an Average Vote, which seemed to work OK). If Average Vote is used, should voters aim to give an average of 5 or use the full range of 1-10? Is it not also important to know how many people prefer zeen A to B? Alas, zeen poll mechanisms is one of those topics which go on and on and on. If you're not careful, we'll have to ship Piggott over and then you really will have something to complain about!!

Having reread page 31, I see that you did use a Preference Matrix, but imply that you didn't also use an Average Vote...oh dear, oh dear. If this is the case, then why are people voting on a 0-10 basis, and in any case, I think that 1-10 is far better. The method by which the Poll Results are determined should be announced in advance. People should be told who voted for which zeens, but not how they voted. Editors should be allowed to stop people from voting for their zeens when they don't see it. A purely Average Vote system or a purely Pref Matrix system are not good ways of calculating results as they are two different systems which take things to



an extreme. In a Matrix, you can do well because people prefer your zeen to others, even though they may not rate it as very good, and in an Average Vote situation, a zeen which appeals to a small minority could win. By combining the two, one would hope to take the advantages of both, but not the disadvantages. One important advantage of the Matrix is pointed out by Paul Milewski when he says that people will vote on different bases and mean different things for a particular value. The voter is also asked to give zeens a rating and to compare them. By the way, if you can't fit your zeens in a 0-10 system to one decimal point, you won't be able to place them in a 0-100 system either. If an editor suspects that certain people will vote for his zeen who shouldn't be, he should inform the Poll Organizer who these people are. If these people then voted for that zeen, their votes would be ignored.

It is impossible to vote on the basis that 10 is perfection. If 10 = perfection, then how far away from perfection is 9.8, 6.7, 3.4? For the UK Zeen Poll, I shall be taking what I consider to be my favorite zeen as 10 (and it won't be my own), zeens which I class as the Elite of UK zeens will score 8+, those which I see and I think should fold will score 1-2. The rest will tend to be spread out between 3-7. Since Piggott should be using a Pref Matrix, I don't need to worry about the score I assign so much. Since he isn't printing what marks I'm assigning no one can be bitchy about them either.

[How are we supposed to know ahead of time who will vote for our zeen that shouldn't? And what makes you think the Poll Organizer will care anyway?]

(BOB OLSEN) I don't vote in *The Poll*, and have no plans to do so in the future, but don't feel that I'm "coercing" or "punishing" anybody. (Anybody who craves my inane opinions so much as to feel "punished" by being denied them ought to be...well...punished.) I have no demands to make and no terms that must be met. I just don't want to be involved. I fully expect that next year *The Poll* will have about 600 votes and run well over 100 pages, and that I'll hear, once again, people say things like, "How the hell did he find my brother's address?" or "Why did he send a ballot to my wife?" or "He chased me around Dipcon and gave me three ballots." And I still won't be impressed! *The Poll* is to me merely an irrelevant and trivial aspect of a silly and frivolous hobby. The more it pretends to \*\*Statistical Significance\*\*, the more quantity is held to be synonymous with quality...the more

ludicrous it becomes.

I'd definitely be out of line, though, if I told other people they shouldn't vote in *The Poll*. Whether they vote or not is none of my business. And if it's wrong to encourage people not to vote, no less reprehensible is it to order them, guilt-trip them, bully them, or nag them into voting. How come we don't hear about that, I wonder?

I will say, though, that all the frenzied megahype surrounding *The Poll* strikes me as distasteful and deplorable. Back when the poll was fun—before it became *The Poll*—it was just a humble little thing, and seldom pretended to be more than it was—a perhaps vaguely indicative thingie that was good for zinny page-fillers for a month or so, nothing more. Now you can hardly pick up a zinny without having to wade through endless hype. One zinny I can think of has run in every issue I've seen this year a long, rapturous tribute-to-himself from *The Pollster* emphasizing how wonderful *The Poll* is, its immense importance, and other congenial topics. (Startlingly enough, this zinny did amazingly well in *The Poll*.) Understand—put down those Yellow Legal Pads!—I'm not questioning the publisher's right to print whatever material he finds worthwhile. And I haven't written a reasonable letter informing him of my objections/viciously tried to coerce and censor an independent publisher's policy of printing great truths. I just won't resub. I've just found a new kind of ballot; I vote with my feet.

*The Poll* will never come close to the minuscule amount of validity that the poll had until it is run as the old poll was, with voters selecting themselves by choosing to send in ballots, rather than being chased around, begged, cajoled, nagged, and guilt-tripped. But of course under such a system, the turnout would be the same as it always was in the old days, and Important All-Time Records impossible to achieve. The present system allows unlimited opportunity for manipulation; but as Ms Martin pointed out in her discussion of years-gone-by, when it comes to manipulating a poll, where there's a will, there's a way.

It's also unfortunate that *The Poll* seems to have eaten some other hobby surveys, such as the Marco and the Freshman. I guess the proprietors of those others despaired of their ability to put out 80 pages of arithmetic autoeroticism...a pity, since they retained their unpretentious "fun" nature to the end. On the other hand, *reductio ad absurdum* does tend to have a deflating effect.

Far's I'm concerned, *The Poll* is and will continue to be an engine of political patronage, nothing more. It is finely-tuned, though; the wheels come off and still it chugs noisily on!



[Oh Bob, you're just jealous that I got a mass mailing sent out about me and you didn't.]

(DAVE MCCRUMB) Poll (Pool) Talk: And so this year's Runestone is out. Big deal. It didn't tell me a damn thing. Personally, I think *TAG* is much better than the 55th percentile. But how do you compare *TAG* to *DW* or *BI*? Mark Larzelere's suggestion of splitting warehouse and reading zeens is good, but as you said what's the one differentiating point: number of games, number of pages of writing, etc?

Using an undefined voting scale is also wrong. What does a "5" mean? To me, it means average, but I have talked to people who consider an "8" average. I was going to set up a standard for my voters this year, but forgot until voting was almost finished. Some definition must be made. Otherwise my 5 for "xxx" will make it weaker than Harvey's 8 for "yyy."

I also received more votes than subbers I could identify. This has happened each of the past three years.

I wonder if Bruce would throw out 10s from a "give me a 10 campaign"? Want to try it?

[Troublemaker. I'm not sure that "setting up a standard for your voters" might not be considered vicious poll-tampering too.

[Of course, we figured out earlier where those extra votes came from. The manager of your Kinko's has been passing your zeen around.]

(PAUL MILEWSKI) Your parenthetical remarks to my letter printed in *HOL* #13 made it clear that you did not understand my critique of the Runestone Poll. Of course, I attribute this failure on your part to the ineffectual manner in which I expressed my thoughts.

Your remark that your "ballot was based strictly on preferences, and a 7 hardly means a 7 at all" is a nonsensical statement. The way the poll is conducted, the only meaning that can be properly attached to a rating of 7 by any respondent is that the item rated 7 is rated higher by that respondent than an item rated 6 by him and lower than an item he rated 8. That is all.

Many people have heard of the Olympic-style 10-point scoring system. That system works by starting each contestant with 10 points, from which is subtracted a predetermined amount (for instance, 4/10ths of a point off for a particular fault) by a judge to arrive at the score. The judges do not pull the numbers out of thin air in the way respondents to the Runestone Poll are forced to do.

The critical question is, "What are the cross-over points?" For instance, in your mind, between what points does a zeen cross over from one being worth the cost of a subscription to one that isn't? At what point does a zeen cross over from being not worthy of special commendation to being one that is? If in response to the first question one respondent were to answer "between 2 and 3" and another answers "between 5 and 6," each has his own rating scale, and their responses cannot meaningfully be averaged or added together. There is no point in tabulating the number of people responding "4" if different people mean different things by responding 4.

Confusion over what each point a rating scale means can be minimized by using as few points as possible. Ten or eleven points are too many. By attempting to extract fine shades of difference in the quality being measured, you invite error. The last thing you want to do is solicit ratings to one or two decimal places instead of as whole numbers.

Another solution would be to develop an Olympic-style system by which predetermined amounts are subtracted from ten for certain defects, such as for not adhering to the announced publishing schedule, for adjudication errors forcing delay of games, etc. Taking this approach, it would be necessary for those conducting the poll to agree on how much weight to give each perceived defect. Think about it. The inevitable result would be to separately rate warehouse-type zeens from the article- or letter-heavy types, as those qualities constituting success as a warehouse-type are not the same as those for the other.

If distinctions are not made between types of zeens by categorizing them according to the demand they are attempting to fulfill, then those qualities upon which respondents are asked to rate zeens must not be type-specific. That is to say, if you rig the rating system to weigh heavily those things important to a warehouse-type, the poll would tend to honor warehouse-types over other(s).

Let us examine some remarks made by Bruce Linsey in his letter in *HOL* #13. "I don't propose to argue that more pages = more quality, but a zeen with lots of high-quality writing is going to be better-liked by more people than is a ten-page zeen with high-quality writing." Really? This is not the way the mind of a person who favors the warehouse-type zeen works, I can assure you. Here we see demonstrated a bias of his in favor of the non-warehouse-type.

"Indeed, a lot of voters send in ballots with scores ranging only from 7 to 10 or so." What is going on here? Are we all schoolteachers saying that anything below 70% is not satisfactory?



70% of what?

"I realize that other's opinions will differ, but I find the 8s on my ballot are close enough in quality to the 9s that I don't need to get any finer." Great. What is an 8? What is a 9. The numeral 8 means nothing. You have to say what an 8 means. All I can surmise is that those he rates 9 are preferred over those he rates 8.

I have read that there seems to be a universal notion which cuts across cultures as to what constitutes the "best" (using that term advisedly) shade of red, or if you prefer, the reddest red. I feel safe in saying that there is no comparable notion among people active in this hobby as to what constitutes the "best" zeen. Different people would weight different factors differently. This is perfectly well and good. For you and you alone, there is some hypothetical perfect zeen for you, if only it existed, and you hope for one that comes close. Why not simply ask each person which zeen comes closest to his own unique ideal and then report which zeen was picked by the most people? The next most frequently picked zeen? How about a two-stage procedure, in the first stage asking everyone to pick his own favorite, in the second stage asking everyone to pick his favorite of the ten picked most often in the first stage, reporting the rank order of those ten as the results of the poll? Excuse me, but are we just infatuated with numbers carried to as many decimal places as our calculators permit, even though those numbers have no meaning?

The present procedure reminds me of the British newspaper circulation game, an example of which is to publish a page of pictures of girls, asking readers to pick the one girl who will be voted the most attractive by the greatest number of respondents. The game ceases to be one in which you pick the one you think is prettiest, because to win you must pick the one you think most people will pick, which is what everyone else is doing.

By giving a maximum rating (ten) to your favorite zeen, and the lowest you can get away with (apparently approaching but greater than zero) to one you don't want to see win, you are rating them simply to rig inclusion in or exclusion from, respectively, those two zeens from the top ten. This is not unlike the elections we have in Ohio for certain offices, such as the one to fill three vacancies on a school board. The instructions on the ballot will be to vote for no more than three, but you can rig your vote to favor one particular candidate you drastically favor over all others by casting only one vote and voting for that particular candidate. You have not done anything to affect which two of the

remaining candidates are elected, but you have done the most you could do to cause your favorite to make it into office.

I have been rereading Julie's comments on page 29 of *HOL* #13 and giving them more thought. Is it inherently sound to pursue the idea of a statistical sample? Isn't the whole idea to give anyone the chance to put in his two cents worth? Indeed the pollster(s) here are not trying to sample, nor should they, since to do so would exclude somebody from participation. I hope I haven't started something by using the words "statistics" and "inference" in the same sentence on page 33. That was not my intent at all. All I meant was that asking people to rate on a 1-to-10 scale is to invite an undefined response that either cannot be interpreted at all or about which only the vaguest generality can be concluded, that is, what in blazes a particular person means when he says "seven" or "four."

[I believe we understood exactly what you meant last time, but I suppose explaining it a *little* more couldn't hurt...

[In your Olympic-style scoring system you say, "Taking this approach, it would be necessary for those conducting the poll to agree on how much weight to give each perceived defect." Unfortunately, how important people think those defects are varies from year to year. Five years ago, being habitually late was the kiss of death in the poll. Last year, the top two poll finishers were worse in this regard than practically any other zeens in Dipdom. Does this mean we will have to revise our scoring system from year to year? Then how will we compare one year to the next?

[And remember, in the Olympics, there is always the problem of the East German judge.

[No, you didn't start something by using the word "statistics"; Bruce used it first.]

(JOHN CARUSO) I can't imagine why Michael Hopcroft isn't sure whether to believe in the Runestone Poll results. Here are some more "facts" about the poll that Bruce Linsey conveyed to me regarding the votes accumulated by my own zeen this year. I could only find 32 names out of the 441 who voted that are either present or recently past subbers to my zeen, yet *KK/W* received 43 votes. Bruce explained these "extra" votes to me in three ways:

1) People who saw or read my zeen from being passed around at cons. Gee, since I haven't gone to any cons in a couple of years—with the exception of Woodycon and, of course, our own Byrnecons—I wonder who is toting at least 3 different issues of



**KK/W** around to pass around at cons? I've never in my pubbing history (which dates back to 1978) had anyone write to me or call me up and say that they saw or read issues of my zeen at a con. I don't understand. What reason would someone have to hand my zeen out or pass around at a con? Unless to gather grudge votes for my zeen. When I hand out samples of my zeen at a con, I've been handed cash/check for a sub, or later been mailed a sub check, but only when I've handed out the sample.

2) Spouses/girlfriends of hobbyists are eligible to vote too. Hmm! In my 32 number, I even counted wives and girlfriends of my subbers. Then again, I didn't allow for the wives and girlfriends of those who might have been handed my zeen at a con without my knowledge.

3) Linsey brags to me that he "personally did vote for **KK/W** this year" even though he did not directly sub. Aha! This didn't surprise me though. I counted him in my original 32. Not that I thought he belonged in that group, but I assumed—and assumed quite accurately, I might add—that he voted for my zeen.

Now, isn't that a good and accurate way to run a poll? Anyone can claim they read your zeen at a con or are the spouse of a hobbyist, and vote. It just doesn't seem fair or proper that a zeen should be subject to these kinds of grudge votes. The pollster's job should be to insure that it doesn't occur, not participate in this practice himself. Sounds to me like if I stood on a street corner with a few copies of other people's zeens that I could legally get complete strangers (to Dipdom) to vote on other zeens, as well as mine. Just think, before I received Bruce's comments, I wrote what might be considered a puff piece about the poll. How refreshing to find that the more things appear to change, the more they stay the same.

There was also a slight problem involving the votes cast for me as a GM. I received 2 votes, yet only 1 of my 5 players eligible to vote actually voted. While it's true that both votes were the same, 8, there is still the potential for a big discrepancy. Let's face it, there was a 50% "illegal" vote for me as a GM, even if only 2 people voted.

I realize that a pollster cannot protect against all problems, but in the case of my zeen, the pollster was a part of the fraud. He could have just as easily deleted the illegal vote for me as a GM. I only GM one PBM game right not, and it's in every issue. He could check my player's names next to the voters' names. But he didn't do that. Not only didn't the pollster try to protect my zeen or me as a GM, but he added to the problem himself by voting for my zeen. I'm not saying problems won't arise, but should the

problems continue year after year to pop up and stand uncorrected? Hey Dick, aren't you glad that **HOL** was also passed around at cons? I'm sure that Robert Sacks is pleased as punch that his were passed around too. If this is how people are voting and are allowed to vote, then the results cannot be accurate as the pollster claims. In fact, accepting these kinds of votes taints the entire poll.

I have a partial corrective proposal for this problem. Have the present Pollster step down, and find a neutral, unbiased, mainstream person to run the poll. Allow publishers who feel that they might be the recipient of "grudge" votes to send a list of all the names of people that they feel are eligible to vote on their zeen/GMing. The pollster could then disallow any improper vote less arbitrarily. Note: this cannot prevent "stuffing" the ballot box. At least the negative vote can be eliminated, the illegal negative vote, that is. Why should someone who doesn't sub to your zeen, and who has a personal three-year old grudge against you, be allowed to vote for your zeen?

Don't kid yourself. The pollster should step down. If he sees nothing wrong with himself voting for a zeen, even though he knows full well that he wasn't a subber, then it stands to reason that he'd allow his friends (as well as anyone, for that matter) to vote on zeens that they do not receive, even to the point of giving "grudge" votes, despite his assurances that votes were legitimately submitted. If the pollster has the poor judgement to look the other way when he himself votes for a zeen he doesn't get, you can rest assured that he could very well look the other way for other "illegal votes."

Also, Bruce solicited me more than once to both participate in the poll and to plug it. Obviously, he doesn't need me plugging the poll to get lots of ballots. Also quite obviously, he feels he needs people he considers high visibility people who previously chose not to participate in his poll to become active in the poll. So his baloney about not caring who votes is just that—baloney.

[Oh c'mon, John, everyone knows you're just saying this stuff, probably making most of it up, even though it is direct quotes, because you don't like Bruce. You couldn't possibly have any valid arguments or reservations about the Poll.]

[As I understand it, Bruce *has* stepped down and appointed me as his successor.]

[You wonder where the extra **KK/W** votes come from? Don't tell me you've already forgotten that time you dropped a planeload of zeens in a strafing run on Woody's house.]

(MARK LARZELERE) Berch, typically,



won't discuss the real issue of the legitimacy of comparing a zeen like *EE* with a one-page warehouse zeen. Instead, I'm criticized for "dumping on the Runestone Poll." Never mind that I voted in the poll—if I don't recognize the Poll as being perfect the way it is, I'm "dumping" on it. Never mind that comparing very different zeens is a legitimate issue—any criticism of the poll is a personal attack on Bruce Linsey. Berch says I got my facts totally wrong. No, only partially. Linsey in *The Cream Shall Rise* did not list *DipiMaster* as a previous poll winner. I'm not criticizing him for that, just saying that doing this helps demonstrate the point that it's ridiculous to compare large zeens with small warehouse zeens. Linsey does a better job of addressing the issues, even though he still hasn't explained why the poll still compares such zeens. Of course, the poll did this long before Linsey took it over, and Linsey is merely continuing the previous policy. With the poll on solid footing, one should be seeking to further improve it, not merely blast anyone who has anything critical to say about it.

[You actually voted in the Poll? Traitor! I hope you at least had the grace to submit a "joke" ballot which had to be thrown out.]

(MARK BERCH) I'd like to inject some fairness and realism into this discussion on the Runestone Poll.

Julie Martin calls the poll "meaningless": "The sample is neither random nor exhaustive...big numbers of voters do not equal 'true' results unless the sample is random or unless you get votes from every single person." This is an impossible standard for any poll to meet. It's a free country, so people can choose for themselves whether to vote. Even in professionally run surveys, all you can do is make a random selection of people to ask—and even then, some will answer the questions, and some won't. And getting the votes from every single person is not a reasonable expectation for large groups. The procedure used—let everyone who wants to vote do so and tally the results—has been commonly used for all sorts of surveys, and people commonly accept the fact that if enough people vote, the results *do* have meaning, even if they do not have statistical perfection. The hard fact of the matter is 441 people did take the time to vote even though Julie personally thinks that the poll is a joke. That's the largest number of people who have ever directly participated in any single hobby undertaking, and if Julie says that it's meaningless, then I say that it is she who is blind to the meaning which is there.

As for disallowing the zero votes, Julie says, "For me, at least, it was just an entertaining way of saying, 'This poll is meaningless, and should be treated as the joke that it is.'" The pollster was soliciting *votes on zeens*. It is clear that she intended these zeroes to be a *vote on the poll itself*. Those are two different things, apples and oranges, and I don't see why the Pollster needs to mix the two. If he wants to make applesauce, not fruit salad, that's his right.

John Caruso calls Linsey's claims of an earlier boycott "senseless, unsubstantiated rantings." But the truth of the matter is, such a boycott operated out of the pages of his own zeen. John says, "Choosing not to vote, whether stated publicly or not, does not constitute a 'boycott.'" Agreed. A boycott requires *concerted action*, and that's exactly what appeared in *KK/W* #94: "Don't forget to write Randolph Smyth and tell him that you won't vote in the poll if Linsey runs it...write Randolph or send him the following petition...Randolph Smyth may be willing to turn the Runestone Poll over to someone else if he feels that there is indeed going to be a heavy boycott...I ask you to sign the following. You can mail it back to me and I will forward it to Randolph..." That certainly sounds like concerted action to me. Let's not try to change history.

And you, Dick, called the poll "little more than a beauty contest which rewards reputation and friendship with the pollster more than ability and a job well done...the message is pretty clear: if only I'd kiss some ass and proclaim the poll to be wonderful in every way then I'd be rewarded with a high finish." That's nothing but crap. Your two zeens finished #6 and #12. No other pubber was able to place two zeens in the top dozen (not to mention coming in #3 in the GM poll), and yet you were the most vocal critic.

[I'd be glad for you to inject some fairness and realism into this discussion, Mark. When you do intend to do so? I notice you have singled out John Caruso, Dick, and myself out of the twelve people who commented on the poll. Why us in particular? Other people also had criticisms.]

[If I get 441 people to say the sky is red, will that make it red? "People commonly accept" all sorts of logical fallacies and statistical lies as "fact" if they haven't been taught to recognize such fallacies and lies. I say yet again, either from ignorance or deliberate attempt to mislead, people (such as you in this letter) who are promulgating the idea that the poll is in any way "statistically significant," or "representative of Dipdom's opinion," or "meaningful" are wrong. You have shown here



enough knowledge of statistics to place you in the second category. (Please spare me the straw-man—"it's a free country: some vote, some won't.")

[The poll is a joke, regardless of my opinion. It is, statistically speaking, a farce, and if Bruce has wasted the time and effort of 441 people by his faulty methodology, which he refuses to correct, he (and you) are the ones with a problem.

[Your point about my intending zeroes to be votes on the poll is well taken. If the pollster wants to make applesauce, then he should do so, and find a way to eliminate grudge votes which are votes on *people*, not votes on *zeens*. And the poll should be de-politicized so that it doesn't draw such votes on itself.

[Your point about not trying to change history is also well taken. Bruce should take this advice as well.

[Maybe Dick thinks he should have and would have done better than #6 and #12 if he had kissed some ass. Maybe he doesn't regard that as a particularly high finish.]

[Actually, *Retal* and *HOL* each finished #3...depending on which half of the poll you look at. And if I had been sweetness and light regarding the poll maybe Linsey would have typed the lyrics to a sappy Carly Simon song on my picture, instead of launching into a four page tirade. Oh, I did quite well enough, thankyouverymuch. —DM]

(ROBERT SACKS) I should like you to print a public request to Linsey that he list the people who voted on *Hansard* in his poll. My circulation is so small that it would be easy to compare the list of voters with the circulation list and determine how many ringers voted. This would serve as a simple test of the poll's validity. I am not asking for a list of how they voted, and clearly some of the voters like my zeen, so I cannot afford to retaliate against anyone for voting, so no one would be in any way endangered by being listed as a voter. Therefore, there can be no reasonable objection to providing this list.

[I can think of four Linsey objections rights off the top of my head, reasonable or not: 1. He doesn't have the ballots anymore. 2. With so few votes, you might be able to figure out who voted what anyway. 3. It's against the rules he's deciding to follow today. 4. Nobody listens to you anyway. Of course, now that I've revealed them beforehand, he'll feel compelled to use something else.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I still haven't digested everything from the issue, but I saw several interesting things. I also got the "Runestone Special"

issue of *Life Goes On*. Disgusting. Putting out a special issue like that is like masturbating in public. "I just called to say I love Me"...Actually, I agree with Julie about the sample. Generating a statistically-valid random sample of Diplomacy players is difficult, though. And not all of them will have seen every zeen. Do we set up a group of "Nielsen Families" of Dip and show them all the zeens? I don't think so. But there has to be a better way of going about this, if the goal is even desirable. Am I responsible to the people who *don't* read my zeen? Still, if you must vote in the poll, it helps to be honest about it. Unfortunately that old bugaboo Hobby Politics will creep in every time.

You've heard about Sacks' offer to give cancer research \$300 less one dollar for every vote in the 1988 Runestone Poll. Something, I'm not sure what, has him incensed. Once again I have stepped into a minefield. I can see the crisis ahead: in February or so Linsey will send me a copy of his ballot and ask me to print it. If I do print it, I'll incense Sacks and his partisans (possibly including you), and if I don't print it, I'll incense Linsey and his allies. It's a ways ahead, but I'm already looking for an out. I may have found one: since publishers get a free copy of *The Cream Shall Rise*, then I could theoretically print the ballot as a "paid advertisement." That's what I'm going to do this issue with the *Diplomacy World* campaign. I don't expect to be in the *DW* "family" for quite some time, but I'll get the *BBB* for '88 if I print it, and since I sub to *DW*, Peery will know if I don't. He will also know, and hopefully remember, if I do. Sacks complained because he didn't get a copy of the results but had to hear about his last-place finish from various sources, including me.

Linsey says he will send the results zeen to any publisher who prints the ballot and "publicizes" the poll. That can presumably be as simple as saying, "The Poll is on again, here's the ballot, send it to this address." When you were running your "give-Retaliation-a-zero" campaign, you were "publicizing the poll" under that definition. I presume you did, in fact, get a copy of the results. Maybe I should get a collection together to send a copy to Sacks, so he'll know how much money he's saving, not to mention how his zeens are listed.

That still leaves the problem of people giving a zeen low votes because they dislike the publisher. I just wish I could think of a way to prevent that sort of thing from happening, but that would be like asking the political nature of the hobby to change, overnight, just like that. For example, I am strongly tempted to give a low vote to *Blunt Instruments* because I dislike Bruce Geryk, just as Geryk is



likely to cast a low vote to *NUTMGS* because he dislikes me. But I think that when it comes time to fill in the ballot, I will be a fair voter and resist the temptation.

[I like the "Nielsen Families of Dip" idea. It could hardly be worse than what we have. You know that they get paid (a token, but still paid) for their "service."

[No, we didn't get a copy of the poll results from Bruce, even though Dick voted, we "publicized" the poll, as you say, and we sent out the ballot in *HOL*.

[You could give a low vote to *BI* and still be fair. What, are you going to try and balance your prejudice by giving him a higher vote than you think he deserves?]

(BOB GOSSAGE) I happened to be called by Bruce four or five times before he actually reached me requesting a revised vote for *Retal*. The reason for this persistence may have been because we are on friendly terms, or it could have been that he wanted to increase the amount of "legitimate" votes for *Retal* so he could say, "I have at hand a large number of legitimate votes for the zeen"—who can tell?

I do agree with you, though, the Davis rule should have been followed. One cannot just change the rules in midstream, and his explanation of enforcing "The Greater Good" rule left a sour taste in my mouth.

[You realize, of course, that some GMs have a "greater good" rule written into their houserules, i.e., if one of the other houserules is found to have such problems that it would cause the games to be irregular, it can be dropped in midgame. I haven't yet noticed it being put into practice, but I wonder if enforcement of the "greater good" rule itself could make the game irregular; after all, it changes the rules in midgame. By analogy, I suppose the poll should be declared irregular, but then, we already know that.]

(ANDY LISCHETT) I don't like the preference matrix part of the zeen poll, partly because it is an unnecessary complication, and partly because it drops *Cheesecake* from 13th to 30th (*Flick of the Wrist* went from 24th to 45th!), but mostly because it is unfair.

For one thing, the preference matrix formula is not right. The formula  $(((\text{victories-defeats})/\text{zeens rated}) * 5) + 5$  should divide by the number of zeens compared with each particular zeen, and not

necessarily by the total number of zeens rated. Since the formula gives a zeen a 5 for each zeen it is not compared to (by calling it a tie), it bends the score of each zeen with "ties on 0 ballots" toward 5. If the hypothetical zeen *Leave Ruth Home* gets all 10s and *Mutant Dust-Bunnies* gets all 0s from the same ten voters, Bruce's formula gives *LRH* a preference score of 5.075 and *MD-B* a 4.934. Dividing by 1 (the number of zeens actually compared) instead of 66 gives *LRH* a 10 and *MD-B* a 0, which accurately reflects the preference of those who receive the zeens.

In the actual poll, *Appalling Greed* should have a final score of 3.628 instead of the 3.800 which Bruce gave it, and should be ranked 60th instead of 57th.

This problem is no big deal, and easy to fix. The next one isn't.

The poll discounts votes from the mean by lopping 10% off the top and the bottom before adding and dividing, yet it doesn't discount anything from the matrix, which is inconsistent. If *Excelsior's* one 0 was a grudge vote and that same ballot had a higher score for each of the sixteen zeens which either tied *Excelsior* or defeated it by one vote, then dropping that 0 would raise the final score from 6.947 to 7.554. *The Diplomat* could go from 5.758 to 6.478, *Cheesecake* from 6.178 to 6.632, *Who Cares?* (with two 0s) from 4.546 to 5.705, *The Gamer's Zeen* from 5.424 to 6.196, and *The Messenger* (with a 1, not a 0) from 4.227 to 5.228. I'm not saying that this happened, but it could happen (and certainly will happen as people realize how to manipulate the poll). How can the poll throw out a vote for one portion of the scoring, but not the other?

A large turnout may dilute votes at the extremes, and maybe the high votes which aren't tossed out offset the low votes (which I doubt), but still it is inconsistent to modify the mean and not the matrix. Just one vote (grudge or otherwise) has the potential to warp the matrix far more than it can warp the mean.

What to do about this problem? I don't know. You can't discard a fixed percentage as in the modified mean, because there's no way to decided (for example) which of two ballots with a 0 to disregard. Maybe the best idea is to stop using the preference matrix.

[You say that people will use this kind of voting to manipulate the poll; we only have to worry about that if they are willing (and able) to sit down and figure out all this math like you and Don Del Grande!



[The real question is: does Bruce know about these kinds of manipulations? He claims to know about statistical procedure. If indeed he does, clearly he should be trying to improve the poll to fix these problems instead of wasting time and energy defending a poor system. If he does not, well, I guess he's not the first guy to exaggerate his qualifications for office.]

**(JIM BURGESS)** Bruce Linsey, Linda Courtemanche (frequently as a confused spectator), and I have been having an extensive discussion about alternate rating systems in the Runestone Poll for months now in *TAP*. I'd be happy to send back issues to Mark Larzelere or Russ or anyone else who wants to see the discussion (no guarantees on when I run out of back issues, so act now...). Essentially, Bruce will not change the poll (surprise).

[There goes that idea.]

**(PETER SULLIVAN)** Julie criticises the US Pollster for throwing out ballots, whilst Malcolm Smith criticises the UK Pollster for *not* throwing out votes for his zeen. What was it ol' Abe said—"You can please some of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time." Hey, polls are for fun, just like the hobby itself is. If you do well, it's an ego-boo and encouragement to carry on. If you do badly, ignore it and carry on as you want to. What you Americans need is a set of Rusty Bolt Awards; that'll stop all your feuding.

[Tell us about the Rusty Bolt Awards? I have heard of them, but know no details.]

**(PETE GAUGHAN)** Steven Clark, Jeff Zarse, and Bruce Geryk (the "Bad Boys of Dip") have the right perspective on awards and games. Ask one of them for a copy of Clark's "Reality Check" (I'll see if I have one to send along...).

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** You are spending far too much time on polls and the inherent problems that will occur because of personality differences. While poll results might be worth a damn if a Diplomacy trivial pursuit variant comes out, they really aren't worth all that much otherwise. Let people who enjoy them do so, others should pay attention when it fits their interests or amuses them; however, all the bullshit of late seems to belong in a grammar school somewhere.

[I couldn't agree with you more, Russ; however, you'll note that this is the topic which

generated the most response this issue. I suggested dropping this topic (and the Publisher's Handbook section) months ago because I felt like all we were getting was a rehashing of the same old arguments. But as long as this many people keep writing this much—I must assume that this is a topic that publishers want to discuss. Bruce, in his arrogance, will think that the only reason we want to talk about the poll is to attack him—so let him think that. I think we might have an interesting, if purely hypothetical, discussion...maybe even spark somebody's interest in running their own poll, perhaps?]

## Publisher's Handbook

**(JOHN CARUSO)** I guess according to Mark Berch's way of thinking someone can't have an objective view regarding the size of something they've never seen. And I suppose that my 9+ years of publishing and GMing and my 10+ years in Dipdom disqualify me from making such an outlandish statement as, "The same advice could probably be given in one-quarter the space." Mind you, this is from the same Mark Berch who never GMed a PBM dip game in his life, yet he feels knowledgeable enough to create PBM GMing rules (WAP) that border on GM interference. How hypocritically pretentious of you. Thank you for your words of wisdom, Mark "Omnimoron" Berch. (After Julie used all those omnithis and omnithat words, and turned me on, I just couldn't resist using one myself, even if it doesn't make any sense.)

[I think this topic really has bitten the dust, so we'll drop this discussion for now, if you don't mind.]

## Why?

**(RUSS RUSNAK)** I publish *Who Cares* (if you can call it publishing) simply because I enjoy running games. I enjoy watching things unfold; I could care less about press or articles. Unfortunately, I have found that without press, articles, or personality, it is damn difficult to attract players (at least for me, anyway). I guess my ideal situation would be to simply run games and let a creative type take care of the rest of the stuff. I would send them out on a regular basis on flyer while the pubber could take care of snappy remarks to press, providing an entertaining package or



personality, and whatever else he cared to do. Do you know of any creative types out there that want to open games but don't want the hassle of running them? If so, point them my way.

[I've never heard of a "team GMing" such as you describe, but I'd be interested to see it in action.]

(DAVE MCCRUMB) Why: I enjoy it. I like to feel in command.

(RAN BEN-ISRAEL) I started publishing because I wanted to GM games. I tried to guest GM for other publishers, but since I was new to the hobby, no one was interested. So I decided to go ahead and start my own zeen. Even though I have never been much of a writer, surprisingly enough, I enjoy the publishing aspect as much as the GMing.

## Fruit Loops

The following people have recently (and not so recently) inquired about postal Dip:

David Blaylock, 119 Allen Farm Rd, Canton, NC 28716  
 J Eric Brosius, 41 Hayward St, Milford, MA 01757  
 Mike Burke, PO Box 24781, San Jose, CA 95154  
 Dan Cardell, 2703 Glenmore Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15216  
 Kevin Crawford, 7129 Seaford Rd, Upper Darby, PA 19082  
 Pat Curley, 2600 N Central, #800, Phoenix, AZ 85004  
 Jon Fleischman, 3318 S Bentley Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90034  
 Kirby Garrett, 12449 N 33rd Pl, Phoenix, AZ 85032  
 Jon Heck, 911 5th Ave SW, Cullman, AL 35055  
 Pte BA Henry; CFB Borden, Base Supply; Borden, Ontario, Canada L0M 1C0  
 Dan Huffman, 12843 Locbury Cir, #C, Germantown, MD 20874  
 Bob Krausman, 348 Eastern Dr, Radcliff, KY 40160  
 John Lenthe, 242 Gleaves Rd, Springfield, PA 19064  
 Shlomo Mantz, 2501 Amsterdam Ave, #705, New York, NY 10033  
 Paul Mraz, 1611 Laguna St, #3, Concord, CA 94520  
 Bob Rademaker, 5625 Trego, The Colony, TX 75056  
 Bruce Roberts, 2303 Savannah, Wichita, KS 67217  
 Ronald Rowe, 508 17th St, Nederland, TX 77627  
 Mark Schaaf, 1104 A1 Riverside Dr, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401  
 Phillip Spera, 292 Park St, West Haven, CT 06516  
 Tom Taylor, 2023 Englewood Ave, Baltimore, MD 21207  
 Alan Tomaszewski, 772 Buckingham Ct, Hoffman Estates, IL 60194  
 Richard Tucker, 1712 Francis Ave, Metairie, LA 70003  
 James Turpin, 420 Wharton Dr, Newark, DE 19711  
 Frank van Dok, 2745 Fenton St, Edgewater, CO 80214

Mark Weseman, 129 E Welcome, #1, Mankato, MN 56001  
 David Williams, 1545 Peachtree Ln, Hatfield, PA 19440

(JOHN CARUSO) You tell me what I'm doing on the fresh fruit list. You are the pubber/editor of your zeen, not me. I don't really need samples.

[Hey, you wanted to know how you could get on the list, and now you know: just ask about it.]

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) Do you have those New Blood lists? I need some more people to send samples to. I'm trying to figure out how else to get people to subscribe. I figure I've gotten all the effective plugs I'm likely to get, and now it becomes a question of sending out samples basically at random. Of the last set of 10 novices I sent samples to, 2 sent back positive feedback. How did the others feel? I don't know. I like to think brilliance shows, but when you've already received two dozen samples one more seems to be a bit of a nuisance. That's why I'm hoping to catch some "new" new blood. (Maybe if I'd sent a sample to Caruso... Nah. I sent him a sample of the preliminary issue, and heard nothing. There is such a thing as too many zeens.)

[Sure, I have new blood for you—always good for a transfusion, that's me. Try writing something for somebody else's zeen. Perhaps somebody will see it, like it, want more, and send you big money to get it. Then again, maybe not.]

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## New Business: Letter Columns

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I've been putting together my letter column. The only real printing-quality letters I have received are from Sacks and David Hood. As you know, both of these people are hard-core Randist "objectivist" economic libertarians. You know, taxation is theft and the whole bit. I don't really mind because that's what I started a letter column for in the first place. But at times it's like they're speaking some sort of code that I don't understand. And I don't think they understand what I say, either, which is going to make a very confused letter column.

I am also curious about how one gets and keeps a decent reputation. Or, indeed, how one finds out what sort of a reputation one has. I tend to put a lot of effort into what I write and then to take some heat for it. I have also been published in a lot of places,



and I presume a lot of people in the hobby have seen at least something I've written. What I'm wondering is how to avoid looking like an idiot without restricting your output. Unless, of course, I really *am* an idiot, in which case whatever advice I get is likely to do me little good. I enjoy writing; I doubt I'd be doing this if I didn't. But I'm learning not to take things so personally. It's how to avoid being taken personally that concerns me.

It seems my novice armor is beginning to wear off a little, as you can probably tell from my letter column. People are starting to recognize me as a figure in the hobby, and thus vulnerable. But I don't really mind. The really disgusting letters I read once or twice and then dismiss. But anything relevant to my letter column topics I usually print. I have ongoing arguments with people, but few real feuds.

(**DICK MARTIN**) I was agonizing about what to write about for the new topic the other day, as I always do, when Ken suggested that I write something about letter columns. "What do I know about letter columns?" I asked. He astutely pointed out that *HOL* seems to be nothing but a glorified letter column. So it is, so it is.... Perhaps my lack of awareness actually was a good thing—so many pubbers end up worrying about "whipping up a good letter column" that it never really seems to take form. My suggestion is that you just let the readers know that the floor is open, and if you get any interesting letters you'll print 'em. When you do get

a publishable letter, try to print it intact (without interjecting comments every few lines) and answer the major points at the end. Ask leading questions when possible, to expand or direct future letters along a particular train of thought. If you happen to disagree with the writer, don't just cut him off if you ever want him to write again—try your best to see the other guy's point.

Letter columns work best if published in a timely manner, with perceptive feedback from the editor. Innocuous letters about the weather or what a great zeen you've got there get boring real fast, and most of us just aren't interested in reading personal mail disguised as a letter column. Keep it clean, concise, and civil, and you'll go far.

Or you could publish the *Brutus Bulletin*....

[I know what you mean about trying to force a letter column into a certain mold. My main experience with a letter column was the ill-starred "USA Toady" in *Retal*. I intended to be the "Miss Manners" of Dipdom, answering questions about proper Dip etiquette. I was quite frustrated when the letters I received were more along the lines of *Kathy's Kornor*. Nothing wrong with *KK*, you understand, but I didn't want just to copy her. Letter columns seem to have an inner life of their own, and should be allowed to grow and develop as much as possible in their own natural way, without, of course, losing the entire thread of the discussion.]

✉ *new address* ✉

**Julie Martin**

**17601 Lisa Drive**

**Rockville, MD 20855-1319**

**USA**

*first class*